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HISTORY

OF

MORAL SCIENCE.

BY

ROBERT BLAKEY,

AUTHOR OF AN ESSAY ON MORAL GOOD AND EVIL.

59642

VOL. I.

LONDON:

JAMES DUNCAN, 37, PATERNOSTER ROW;

BELL & BRADFUTE, BANK STREET, EDINBURGH;

AND M. OGLE, GLASGOW.

M.DCCC.XXXIII.

Edinburgh:
Printed by A. Balfour and Co. Niddry Street.

TO THE

REV. MATTHEW BROWN, M. A.

MINISTER OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MORPETH.

My Dear Sir,

There is no one to whom I can with more fitness and propriety dedicate these Volumes than to you. I have uniformly, since I had the pleasure of your acquaintance, received the most kind and friendly attentions at your hands; and poor and inadequate as is the tribute of regard here tendered, I feel confident you will accept it, as a grateful token of esteem, from a humble but I trust a sincere admirer of your great moral worth and truly Christian character.

The ability, zeal, and genuine benevolence, with which you have hitherto discharged the duties of your pastoral office

in this place, as well as the consideration of the great benefits which have resulted to a numerous and affectionate flock, from the conscientious discharge of these duties, induce me to express an ardent wish that you may long be spared to pursue your highly useful and important labours; and may continue to receive, in return, not only the cheering testimonies of a good conscience, but the grateful acknowledgments of those for whose temporal and everlasting welfare you feel so deep an interest.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours, most sincerely,

ROBERT BLAKEY.

MORPETH,
March 18, 1833.

PREFACE.

In presenting this work to the public, I have been influenced principally by a desire to give to the general reader, and the student of moral philosophy, a condensed and correct outline of the leading theories of moral duty, which are either in common circulation in our seminaries of learning, or are referred to in the writings of our most popular theoretic moralists. I have heard it frequently stated by those who have gone through a prescribed course of lectures on moral science, that though they were made acquainted with the names of several of the principal writers, and heard their moral opinions developed and commented on; yet the limited space

of a course of lectures could not furnish them with an adequate conception of the nature and extent of the theories brought under notice, nor with any thing relating to the authors by whom they were framed. Students, for example, might hear the names of Hobbes, or Clarke, or Wollaston, or Mandeville mentioned, but they would have but a very imperfect knowledge of the moral speculations of these authors.

It has been, therefore, my aim to supply, in some measure, the want of information arising out of the circumstances already mentioned; and as far as possible to make this publication embrace two objects—that of conveying useful and agreeable instruction to the general reader, and to supply those who have to go through a course of lectures on moral philosophy, with a compendious outline of all the leading topics of discussion which may be brought under their notice. How far I have succeeded in accomplishing this twofold design, I must leave the public at large to determine.

In entering on the examination of the various systems which I have noticed, two courses seemed to present themselves for me to follow. The one, to criticise each theory as it came under review, in order to show how it either agreed or differed from

some theory of my own; the other, to give the arguments on each side for any system, fairly and candidly, and allow the reader to draw his own conclusions respecting them. I have in general followed the latter plan. I have endeavoured to give the scope and bearing of every author's system in as full a manner as the importance of the subject or the plan of this work could justify; reserving to myself the privilege of stating, in the last Chapter but one, to what particular theory I am inclined to give the preference.

I thought it would prove an advantage to the work, to insert a short biographical notice to each system. These short sketches are only intended to make the reader cursorily acquainted with the respective authors whose works are noticed, and not by any means to supply the place of a lengthened detail of the life and character of each. I have taken most of these biographical accounts from Aiken's General Biography, the Edinburgh and London Encyclopædias, and other similar sources. I beg also to add, that the substance of five or six of the Chapters of this book were published by me, in the shape of Essays, in a respectable periodical publication, ten or twelve years ago.

In examining so many different systems, it is very

possible I may occasionally have been led into error in forming my opinions of them. I can only say, that I have been at all times actuated by an ardent desire to do justice, and to act fairly, both towards the living and the dead. At the same time, I have been equally anxious to judge and think for myself. And I trust that the candid critic will allow, that in pursuing this independent course, I have in no instance overstepped the legitimate boundaries of a free and candid discussion of the merits of those numerous theories I have ventured to examine. I have not knowingly had any partialities nor enmities to warp my judgment; and if I have been, in any instance, betrayed into an expression of censure or applause, which may seem unmerited, I hope the reader will attribute it to an error of the understanding, rather than to the heart.

If there be any errors of the press in these pages, the reader will I hope excuse them, as I have found it impossible to attend so carefully to the correction of the work, on account of my living at a considerable distance from the place of publication.

MORPETH, 18th MARCH 1833.

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HISTORY

OF

MORAL SCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY is usually defined to be that part of knowledge which relates to human conduct; treats of the motives which appertain to that conduct; and to what ends and purposes it ought to be directed.

Casting our eyes over the actual condition of the human race, so far as personal observation or the observations of others enable us to do so, we see a wonderful difference in their external appearances, habits of life, and mental capacity and acquirements. From the rude wanderer on the bleak

and inhospitable shores of Terra del Fuego, to the intelligent philosopher or statesman in the polished and luxuriant European city, we perceive a wide disparity of nature and condition. But this apparent chasm is filled with various grades of human beings, approximating to each other in bodily appearances and modes of life, so as to present to us such a gradual variation of outline, and a unity of appearance and design, as to force the conclusion on our minds that they are all of the same family or species; and that the varieties we perceive arise more from incidental circumstances than from any general differences in human constitutions.

But great and numerous as the differences are in bodily make, colour, modes of life, tastes and habits; yet the moral diversities of our race appear, on a superficial glance, to be still greater, and of a more marked and striking character—we see the inhabitants of one nation performing actions which they consider meritorious and praiseworthy; but which another race of people hold in abhorrence and execration. There are hardly to be found two distinct communities of individuals upon the face of the earth, who have the same standard of right and wrong, or who seem to be actuated by the same passions, feelings, and dispositions.

But if we accustom ourselves to look a little beneath the surface of this seeming discordancy, and contrariety of moral feeling and sentiment, we will soon recognise some leading principles of agreement, which exert their influence over every cast and condition of human nature, with a force and precision corresponding to the instincts implanted in the inferior orders of creation—we will see that the moral differences among our race are of an accidental nature, and arise principally from the different external circumstances in which we are placed, and from the different degrees of intellectual vigour imparted to us. These general principles which run through the whole of human nature, in all its modes of existence, manifest themselves in a variety of ways, and form the ground-work of all our reasonings and conclusions respecting the moral conduct of mankind; of their various capabilities of improvements; and of those means which are calculated either to accelerate or retard their present or everlasting welfare. These principles give unity and design to the moral world; convert anomalous and discordant appearances into harmonious agreement; and, in fact, enable us to speak a language intelligible to all mankind, and to move, by one common impulse of sympathy, the affections and

feelings of every human being, under whatever clime he may reside.

Though a general principle be clearly discernible running through the whole of human nature, and the leading grounds of moral obligation and duty be recognised by all mankind, yet nothing has caused more extended discussions, than inquiries as to the nature of this principle of congruity, and by what name it should be designated. We see clearly from the present, as well as from the history of the past condition of our race, that various interpretations are given to what is meant by the words right and wrong; that mankind differ widely as to their opinions respecting these objects which constitute good and evil; and that they are by no means agreed as to the course of conduct which is most likely to secure the one, or avoid the other. The cause of this discrepancy in the opinions of men as to moral objects, arises partly from the constituted order of things, and partly from mankind being influenced in their general judgments by prejudices, partial examinations of facts, and by paying more attention to insulated and momentary feelings and passions, than they ought to do.

Moral philosophy is the same as natural philosophy in one essential particular, namely, that it is

built upon observation and fact. The moral rules and principles which are laid down, are all drawn from the nature of man, as that nature is unfolded to us by observation and experiment. In both cases we place nature in a certain situation, and our knowledge consists in perceiving and faithfully registering the results of the experiment. To know men thoroughly, we must just follow the same plan as we do when we want to know the nature of any other creature, or any piece of machinery. We must learn the particular construction of the animal or machine; observe the parts of which the one or the other is composed; see their joint action; and then draw inferences as to the determination of the whole.

The science of morals is one so intimately blended and connected with doctrines of such great importance to man, that the cultivation of it cannot but recommend itself to every well-disposed heart, and lover of true wisdom. This study, more perhaps than any other, is calculated to elevate the mind and purify the affections; to give us the most lofty and exalted ideas of our own nature, and of the situation we hold in the scale of being; and to remove the mind from all those ignoble, mean and degrading trains of thought, which lead men into

wicked and disreputable modes of life. In forming a habit of analyzing the constituent elements of our moral and intellectual natures, and observing how their different mixtures, degrees, and proportions mould our characters, opinions, and conduct; we must insensibly, as it were, obtain a firmer command and grasp over our powers and faculties, and be led frequently to take a revision of our general behaviour, which will beget a love of what is good, fair, and honourable; and a hatred of what is evil, disgusting, and mean. All real knowledge exercises a beneficial effect upon our moral natures; but there is no branch of human inquiry so well fitted to produce so large a share of good fruits, as a systematic and accurate acquaintance with our moral powers, principles, and actions.

This science has also the effect of pointing out to us that relation which subsists between us and the great, wise, and good Creator of the universe. This is a relation the most important and interesting to men. While we examine the moral constitutions of ourselves and others; the instincts, faculties, affections, and appetites; and point out the duties and rules of conduct calculated to promote our own as well as the happiness of all around us; we are insensibly led to direct our thoughts to Him, who is the great

Lawgiver to the whole society of moral and rational intelligences.—Here that strong and original propensity in our nature to reverence whatever is great and sublime, finds ample scope for its most vigorous exercise, by contemplating that wisdom, goodness, and order which He has established in the universe. Hense arises those feelings and sentiments of reverence, gratitude, resignation and esteem which bind the soul as it were with the great Author of its existence, and which communicate to the stream of life a continual freshness, which cheers every stage of our pilgrimage on earth.

The science of morals is closely connected with the social welfare of mankind. It is impossible to expect just and wholesome laws, if the governors and the governed are both ignorant of the general and leading principles of men's moral nature; on the contrary, wherever this ignorance prevails, misery and misrule will be the necessary consequences. A social community, in a state of peace and prosperity, presents to the philosophical moralists' one of the most interesting objects of speculation which can fall under the notice of a human being.—Here we see millions of human creatures all individually most anxiously looking after their own welfare; all endowed with nearly the same

faculties, and seeking their own happiness, ease, wealth, and comfort, by various means; and yet all presenting a unity of purpose and design, whereby the conflicting interests of individuals are made productive of general harmony and concord. But such an object as this cannot be viewed with advantage or profit, if we are ignorant of those leading principles of action in human nature, by which such results are produced. Nor can we learn to extract the lessons of wisdom which the contemplation of such an object is fitted to impart, without looking carefully at the individual portions of the social machine, taking accurate notice of its movements, and faithfully recording its results. An astronomer might as vainly attempt to measure the distance of the planets, and unfold their laws of motion, without a particle of knowledge of the science of number and quantity, as for a politician or lawgiver to pretend to understand the science of legislation, without an accurate knowledge of the moral nature of man.

There is another great and obvious advantage which the cultivation of moral science has over many branches of natural philosophy, and that is, it can be studied in full perfection without any expensive apparatuses, or collections of the works of

nature or art. In many departments of natural science, it is impossible, in their present state, to make any considerable proficiency in them, without having large and expensive collections of instruments, cumbersome laboratories, and numerous specimens of material objects; and these require pecuniary resources, and advantageous situations, which cannot, in the natural course of things, fall to the lot of many. If you wish to cultivate astronomy, and be acquainted with the present state of the science, you must have a telescope, and many other instruments besides; if you want to be a first-rate chemist, you must be furnished with suitable materials for making your experiments; and if you wish to be an adept in natural history or geology, you must collect specimens of the various animated as well as solid materials which are to be found upon and in the earth; or have opportunities of consulting the collections of others who are prosecuting the study of these sciences with yourself. But the study of human nature is free from all such encumbrances.—It can be pursued by the poor as well as the rich.—It is a spontaneous fountain, from which all mankind may draw the waters of knowledge, without money, and without price. Here the thirst for information, however ardent or craving, may

be fully satiated, out of the abundance of our own resources. An extensive and boundless tract of inquiry is laid before us, as inexhaustible in its materials, and diversified in its aspects, as the earth on which we tread. All that is required of us to traverse this region with benefit and instruction is, that we use the instruments which our bountiful Creator has placed in our hands; namely, to make use of our own consciousness; look into the constitution of our natures; and examine, with care, judgment, and impartiality, the moral and mental fabrics of others.

A common objection against the study of the more abstract principles of human nature is, that they are encircled with many formidable difficulties, which neither genius nor industry are able to remove. True, there are difficulties connected with speculative morality, neither few in number, nor insignificant in magnitude; but it may be asked, what department of human knowledge is free from similar difficulties and perplexities? In every part of Nature's works, the philosophical inquirer meets with questions which baffle all his ingenuity to solve; but the difficulties we meet with on subjects connected with human nature, are neither more numerous, nor of a more insolvable nature, than

those which we meet with in every other department of science. The natural as well as the moral philosopher stand nearly upon the same footing as to their incapacity to unfold the ultimate principles of things which come under their respective observations.

In cultivating moral science, and the philosophy of the mind in general, we ought to conduct our inquiries with a spirit of candour and humility; readily acknowledging difficulties where they occur, and always putting the most charitable interpretation upon the opinions of those who may be led to form different theories of human nature from our own. And it never can be too deeply impressed upon our mind, not to strain our faculties to comprehend that which is incomprehensible, nor labour to give explanations of what cannot be explained. If we neglect this advice, we may perhaps succeed in entangling ourselves or others in the cobwebs fabricated by our own sophistry and subtility, and dote over the chimeras of our own imagination with a degree of superstitious reverence. But we will not add to the stock of real knowledge; nor be able to unfold those more obvious and striking principles of our nature, which ought to be constantly kept in view in all our inquiries into moral subjects. We ought to

carry about with us at all times a vivid conception of the limitation of our faculties, and to let the truth sink deep into our hearts,—that over the abstract nature or essence of all things, whether moral or physical, the Almighty has thrown an impenetrable veil of mystery. Our ambition and boundless curiosity may induce us to draw aside this veil ; but our efforts will end in disappointment, and our curiosity will remain unsatisfied. If we persevere in our presumptuous and unhallowed course, difficulties and embarrassments will thicken around us, and our only reward, and the only legacy we will have to leave to our successors, will be, a few vague and indefinite notions, and a multitude of words without meaning, The real essence of mental, as well as material objects, may be compared to the land of promise of the Israelites of old, of which they were permitted to have a distant prospect, but into which they were not generally permitted to enter. The line of demarcation between what is possible and what is impossible for men to know, is, for all useful purposes, clearly marked and discernible. The author of nature has stamped upon the face of things, in characters sufficiently legible for the use of ignorant and unwary philosophic wanderers, "Thus far thou shalt go, and no farther."

CHAPTER II.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE ANCIENT SYSTEMS OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, DOWN TO THE END OF THE FIFTH CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

THE objects of moral science, and inquiries immediately or remotely connected with them, have been at all times subjects of interesting discussion among mankind, from the earliest ages of literature down to the present period. Nearly two-thirds of all the really valuable writings of the ancient sages and philosophers, whose names have been transmitted down to us through many generations, may be said to consist of ethical disquisitions, mingled with a considerable portion of the leading principles of natural religion.

And it may here be remarked, that a very limited acquaintance with the ancient philosophers must convince us, that in regard to matters con-

nected with ethics and natural religion, and particularly as to the fundamental principle of all rational worship—the existence of a first great cause, they carried their researches to as great a length as the circumscribed nature of the human faculties would allow. Speculations on the rules and obligations of morality, and those topics which were considered necessarily associated with them—the origin of the world—the nature and essence of the first cause, and the constitution of the human soul; were considered by them as studies of a peculiarly exalted and ennobling description; and entitled by their intrinsic merits, and the high intellectual endowments they called into active exertion, to take precedence of all other branches of human knowledge. And though we are apt betimes to smile at the vain conceits and puerilities—the babbling and fanciful distinctions of the ancient sages; yet the conclusion is forced upon us, that this misapplication of intellectual exercise entirely arose from the extended and profound discussions on the principles of virtue and natural religion, and from the high esteem in which all speculations of that nature were held by thinking and inquisitive men. Looking at the system of ancient philosophy as a whole; casting a glance at its lead-

ing and prominent features, we must acknowledge that the moderns have not succeeded in adding much that is entitled to consideration, either for its originality or importance, by the mere exercise of their mental powers. On many points, we have been mere copiers of what the ancients have written on the subject. Whatever advances and improvements may have been introduced, in later times, into the systems of moral philosophy and metaphysical theology, may be fairly traced to the more correct and exalted views with which the Scriptures have furnished us, as to the nature and destinies of man, than to the uninspired and unassisted intellectual powers, which modern philosophy boasts of having brought into exercise.

From every thing which can be gathered relating to the history of morality in the very early ages of the world, it would appear that moral rules and duties were not reduced to any regular systematic form, but were conveyed from family to family, and from generation to generation, in the form of short sentences and brief maxims. There can be no doubt but the proverbs and wise sayings, fables and allegories, we meet with in books of acknowledged antiquity, were the consequence of this mode of conveying moral instruction. Of these

the most famous are the Proverbs of Solomon, the words of Agar, the golden verses of Pythagoras, and the Fables of Æsop. There is a surprising quantity of wisdom embodied in these works; and the manner in which it is conveyed is admirably fitted to excite attention and to assist the memory.

The less ancient systems of morality are commonly divided into three kinds or sets of principles, the Platonic, the Epicurean, and the Stoical. As this division will answer all the ends purposed, we will keep by it, and give a brief outline of the prominent moral doctrines taught by each sect or party.

The Platonic philosophy, founded about 430 years before the Christian era, considered virtue to be a similitude to God; and similitude consisted in becoming just with prudence. In one place Plato makes this divine similitude consist in temperance; and in another, in temperance and justice conjoined. "Are they not the most happy, and such as go to the best place, that have exercised the popular and political virtue of temperance and justice?" He also considered the human soul to be an emanation from the universal essense, or supreme Being, and that it had existed from all eternity, and was immortal. As the soul of man was thus con-

sidered as forming a part of the divine nature, it was not affected by the diseases and infirmities of the body; but it flourished in perpetual youth, amid the wreck of universal nature. Man was looked upon as a being prone to evil, but, by a vigorous exercise of his own powers, might raise himself to a state of perfect virtue and happiness. The most renowned of Plato's disciples were, Zenocrates, Aristotle, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, and Isocrates. After his death, Aristotle taught his doctrines in the Lyceum, and his followers were designated *peripatetics*, to distinguish them from the disciples of Zenocrates, who succeeded his master in the academy.

The opinions of Plato have exercised a considerable influence over the speculative notions of philosophers of every succeeding age. The Platonic theory has always been considered more in unison with some of the leading doctrines of natural and revealed religion than any other heathen system. But, during many centuries after the introduction of Christianity, some of the theological and metaphysical notions of Plato were frequently used as instruments for corrupting the pure and simple doctrines of the gospel.

The Epicurean system of morality, established

300 years before Christ, is founded upon the principle, that a moderate and temperate indulgence of our passions and appetites constituted happiness. The Epicurean virtue, in general, was but a loose species of private and public expediency; and the principal tenets of the system are liable to great abuse, by representing virtue as something to promote and give a zest to our sensual indulgences; and that our notions of good and evil, right and wrong, depend chiefly upon custom, popular opinion, and the prejudices of education. It must be confessed, however, that many good and able men have admired the doctrines of *Epicurus*, and have denied that such loose principles and immoral practices were countenanced by him. The Epicurean system has, in later times, been set in opposition to the doctrines of the Stoics, which were supposed to aim at the total extinction of all the passions and feelings of human nature; whereas, his disciples wished to counteract those harsh and extravagant notions, by endeavouring to show that happiness consisted in the temperate indulgence of our natural passions, and the proper regulation of every desire, agreeably to the standard of virtue. It is acknowledged on all hands, that *Epicurus* himself led a life of singular temperance and vir-

tue, and was distinguished by his urbanity of manners.

The moral philosophy of the Stoics, established 200 years before Christ, as laid down by its more modern advocates, *Epictetus*, *M. Antoninus*, *Seneca*, and *Plutarch*, is, that they considered themselves as under the divine care and protection of *Jupiter;* and were required to discharge their duties of subjects, friends, ministers, soldiers, citizens, sons, &c., with zeal and fidelity. The law of subjection to this deity, imposed upon them both active and passive obedience, by discarding all external things, as the body, riches, fame, the love of power and distinction, &c. &c.; and to consider solely what was *agreeable to nature*, that is, our own nature, as rational, social, and human beings; and the will of the governing principle of the universe. This divine lawgiver requires we should imitate him in faithfulness, beneficence, liberality, and magnanimity; to give praises to him for enabling them to live a virtuous and pure life; to eat and drink, so as to please him; to live in a constant remembrance of him; and to take no important step in life without invoking his guidance and protection.

In our duties to mankind we are to keep always

in remembrance, that we are only individual parts of a great and universal system of rational beings; and that we are to observe the duties and obligations which arise out of this union; such as countrymen, kinsmen, fellows, associates, brothers, neighbours; as we are all of one parent mind, and fellow-members of one body. We should not be hurried or carried away by any unsocial feelings or propensities; but be mindful of the gods, and to act a kindly, just, and courteous part to all rational beings.

The famous doctrine held by this sect, that pain was not an evil, is thus set forth by *Epictetus*. "Hearken to me, and you shall never live in envy, nor be in anger, grief, or fear; never be prohibited, nor ever flatter any. To me no evil can happen; to me there is no thief, nor any earthquake; but all things are full of peace or undisturbance. I seek good and evil within, only in mine own things; not giving the name of good or evil, of utility or damage, or any such thing of that nature, to things not in my own power." *Plutarch* also observes, "If I be imprisoned I suffer no prohibition; if thrown down a precipice, I suffer no constraint; if tortured, not tormented; if bound, not hurt; if I fall in wrestling, not vanquished; if encompassed by a wall, yet I cannot be besieged;

and if I be sold by enemies, I cannot be captivated. I have riches and a kingdom, and am fortunate, and prosperous, unindigent and self-sufficient, without a penny in my purse."

The various systems of Grecian philosophy having been adopted by the Romans, were, in numerous shapes, incorporated with the particular opinions on morality and religion entertained by that people. Some writers affirm that all these eastern theories were not to be considered as the original productions of the people among whom they were found and cultivated, but were primarily derived from the Jewish religion and sacred scriptures; but having been amalgamated with the local systems of polytheism and idolatry, so prevalent among all the Gentile nations, these theories had lost, in the course of ages, nearly all resemblance to the divine records from which they originally emanated. Many eminent writers have maintained, that all heathen systems and legislative codes were nothing but corruptions of the doctrines taught by Moses, and other sacred writers, in the Old Testament. Among these writers we may mention Grotius, Stillingfleet, and Gell, the last of whom affirms that Plato had been in Egypt, and there became

acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, from which he derived the leading principles of his system.

Such, then, were the notions which the heathen world entertained, at the advent of our Saviour, on the nature of morality, and of those other important topics generally connected with it—the principles of natural religion. Among the Jews, at this period, as well as among the Gentiles, we find there existed a wide difference of opinion on the nature of moral obligation, and on those doctrines immediately connected with their divine religion. The Jewish doctors, or men of learning, were divided into many sects or parties; but three of the leading of these were the *Pharisees*, the *Sadducees*, and the *Essenes*. All these sects agreed in the authenticity of the sacred writings, but, at the same time, they were perpetually wrangling among themselves as to the nature of many of the fundamental principles of theology laid down in these scriptures. One of the leading topics of controversy was, "*Whether the written law alone was of divine origin?*" The Pharisees insisted upon adding to this law, another from oral tradition; but to this the Sadducees and the Essenes objected, and maintained, that this oral law was of

no authority at all. The Pharisees believed in the immortality of the soul, and in the doctrine of future rewards and punishments to both body and soul;—the Sadducees, on the contrary, denied a future state of existence, and confined the punishment which might be inflicted upon wicked persons to this life alone. The Essenes held opinions different from both. They held that future rewards and punishments extended to the soul only, and not to the body; which they conceived was a mass of impurities, and which acted like a prison-house for the more spiritual and ethereal part of our nature.

From these diverse and conflicting systems, it could not be expected that mankind, at this period, would generally possess any very accurate views on the nature and obligations of morality, or that their practical ethics would be regulated by any very lofty or dignified standard. The heathen world being totally devoid of any conception of the one living and true God, and being debased by the most ridiculous and revolting idolatry, gave themselves up to all manner of licentiousness, so that there was scarcely as much morality among them as would bind and keep together their vicious communities. This fact is pointedly and forcibly esta-

blished and dwelt upon by the apostle Paul, who had visited most of the great cities and seats of learning and science, and whose description is fully borne out by the concurrent testimony of all the profane historians of that period. He says, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, they were "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

After the death of our Saviour, and the regular establishment of the Christian systems, morality appears under an altogether new and interesting aspect. The novelty of many of the doctrines of the Christian dispensation, as well as their peculiar adaptation to the wishes and wants of the human race—the purity and simplicity of the moral duties and precepts therein taught—and the holy and exemplary lives of the apostles and first teachers of the gospel,—could not fail to make a deep impression upon the minds of men in general, and particularly among those who had been long habituated to philosophical inquiries. The Scriptures, clothed

with no intricate system of speculation or mysticism, but presenting themselves to mankind in simple declarations and authoritative commands, might naturally be supposed to be adopted, by the generality of the people, with that spirit of meekness and simplicity, which commonly marks the acceptance of truth, when presented to the mind in a plain and intelligible garb. But this would not be the case with the learned and philosophical. They had been early nursed in various opposite systems of speculation, had their minds deeply impressed with the importance of these speculative topics, and could, therefore, but ill endure the extension of any set of opinions and principles which might seem to be at variance with their respective philosophical creeds. In this state of matters, one of two things might naturally be supposed to take place—that some of these persons would reject the gospel altogether, as not being in strict accordance with their own systems, to which they had been taught to pay such devoted reverence,—and that those who, from various causes, might be induced to lend a willing ear to the accents of divine inspiration, would endeavour, by all their art and ingenuity, to incorporate the doctrines and precepts of Christianity with their own philosophical theories.

And this is precisely what did take place in the early ages of the church. Many of the learned violently opposed the introduction of the Scriptures, while a very general desire prevailed among those of speculative habits, who were favourably inclined to their extension, to appear before the world in the double character of the philosopher and the divine.

Accordingly we find, that in the first five centuries of the Christian era, there was a perpetual struggle among the learned, who professed their faith in the doctrines of the gospel, to amalgamate them with the prevailing dogmas of heathen philosophy. The whole of the Epistles of St. Paul teach us, that this practice was universal in the Christian church, even in the times of the Apostles; for all these Epistles, though written to different classes of Christians, in various parts of the world, were invariably directed against some philosophical opinion which had been allowed to exercise an unfriendly influence over their minds. The disputes and writings of the learned, after the days of the Apostles, manifest the same desire to unite philosophy with religion. The two leading systems of speculation, which prevailed from the first to the fifth century inclusive, were the Platonic and the Gnostic, or oriental. These two different

sects had many points in common, yet they were always opposed to each other in all general and leading matters of dispute. The tenets of Plato were, in their prominent principles, always considered more in unison with the doctrines of the gospel than any other set of heathen dogmas, for they were of a refined and spiritual nature,—and his speculations concerning the nature of the deity, the immortality of the soul, &c. were commonly thought to be of a more rational and sublime character than those promulgated by any other philosophical school. But his doctrines were by no means invariably adhered to; for many eminent men of learning of that day culled out of his system what they fancied agreeable to themselves, while, at the same time, they enlisted themselves under the banners of his name. Thus *Ammonius*, in the second century, proposed a new system of Platonism, which was widely disseminated through the east, but which had very few of the leading principles of the Grecian philosopher in it. It was entirely composed of scraps and shreds of every learned creed that prevailed at that period. This doctrine exercised a most extensive influence over the opinions of the early Christian fathers; and gave rise to many of the most noted and destructive

heresies which impeded the growth of rational religion and sound piety in the early ages of the church.

The Gnostic theory had an extensive influence over the moral opinions and conduct of the primitive disciples of the Gospel. The fundamental principle of this sect was, that all evil took its rise from matter; that the body was a sort of prison-house to the soul; and, therefore, to aim at any thing like perfection in virtue and holiness, it was necessary to mortify and extenuate the body, and bring all its appetites and passions into a complete state of subjection. This doctrine led the way to the adoption of that opinion, so very fruitful of bad consequences to the rising interests of true religion, that our Saviour had established *a double rule of moral duty*, for two distinct orders or classes of his followers. The one was called ordinary, the other extraordinary. The former was for persons who were necessarily engaged in the bustling scenes of the world; and the latter for those who aspired to a more lofty rank in virtue and holiness. These opinions gave rise to ridiculous and debasing notions as to the nature and object of virtue. The disciples of this ascetic system looked upon themselves as prohibited from the temperate indulgence

of all the rational pleasures of life; such as wine, flesh, matrimony, &c.; and considered morality to consist chiefly in watchings, abstinence, labour, hunger, and all manner of severe mortifications of the body. This morose discipline naturally drew men into cloisters and caves, where they conceived themselves removed from the grossnesses and wickedness of the world at large; and they passed a life in the vain and useless efforts to sublimate their natures so as to approach to something like celestial perfection.

The speculative principles of morals became, during these first five centuries of the Christian era, so closely interwoven with religious disputes on points of great subtility and refinement, that little can be gathered from these early ages which can be in the least degree instructive to the general reader. Several treatises on practical morality were, however, published during this period. *Justin Martyr* has an epistle to *Tano* and *Severus*; *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, composed books on calumny, patience, continence, and other virtues; but these have been lost in the lapse of time; *Tertullian* wrote upon chastity, flight in the times of persecution, fasting, shows, female ornaments, and prayer; *St. Ambrose* wrote several works on morality, the princi-

pal of which is styled *de Officiis.* Though addressed to the clergy, it treats of the moral duties of all Christians. He resolves all human happiness into a knowledge of the deity, and integrity of life; and endeavours to show that there can be no real profit or happiness separate from honesty. He also treats of friendship, fidelity, liberality, benevolence, civility, readiness to assist the poor and afflicted, hospitality, and all those other virtues and affections necessary for the comfortable intercourse of the human kind. There are also many excellent things to be found in the works of *St. Chrysostom,* and *St. Augustine,* though the works of the latter are principally of a controversial character.

There are different opinions entertained among the learned, as to the general value of the moral writings of the primitive fathers of the church. By some they are extolled to the highest pitch of excellence; and by others depreciated to a very low standard of value. *Berbeyrac,* a French author, wrote a book "*On the Morality of the Ancient Fathers,*" in which he rather undervalues their importance and worth. The true estimate of their excellence as moralists may perhaps be found by steering a middle course among these conflicting judgments. There are undoubtedly valua-

ble observations scattered over their writings, and many correct and profound principles of morality handled in a very masterly manner; but at the same time these are frequently mixed up with philosophical and theological questions of a very recondite and unprofitable nature. There is one fact, however, which is worthy of notice here, and for the truth of which every reader of ecclesiastical history will testify, that from about the sixth century downwards, the writings of the ancient fathers were held in very high estimation by all those men of learning who opposed themselves to the inroads of ignorance and scholastic jargon; and who were anxious to bring men to entertain rational views of the nature of morality. These few truly enlightened men, scattered as they were over many centuries of nearly profound intellectual darkness, always placed the writings of the ancient fathers of the church next in point of value and usefulness to the scriptures themselves.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED: FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY TO THE TIMES OF MR. HOBBES.

Up to the commencement of the sixth century, the philosophical opinions of Plato, and the system of the Gnostics, had exercised an almost undivided sway over the minds of the Christian fathers and doctors of the church. The doctrines of Aristotle had hitherto never been able to gain any thing like popularity; for the expounding of them was confined within very limited bounds indeed. A change, however, took place at this period, which produced very considerable effects upon the general nature of doctrinal religion and theoretical morality. The Emperor Justinian published, at Athens, an edict against all philosophy, which was supposed to be exclusively levelled against the modern system of Platonism, then very popular, but to which he

seemed to have a great dislike. In consequence of this edict, the learned all fled into Persia, which was, at that time, at war with the Roman empire; and though the majority of them returned when peace between the two states was effected, in A. D. 533, yet the temporary absence of these teachers of the people had produced a coldness and unconcern towards their philosophical tenets, which all their subsequent efforts to regain their former popularity were unable to remove.

It may be necessary to apprise the general readers here, that by the system of Aristotle is meant only one part of his very numerous writings, namely that on *logic*, or the art of reasoning. This was considered as an important instrument for the discovery and propagation of truth. It would be altogether out of place here to give even any thing like an outline of this system of logic; but it may be briefly mentioned, in passing, that the leading principle of it was founded upon the presumed importance of the various forms in which the *syllogism* may be used in all our reasonings, especially on abstract and subtile questions. There has a great deal been written, even in modern times, on the merits of this part of the philosophy of Aristotle. By some it has been totally and unceremoniously

condemned; and by others it has been praised and considered useful. However, it is not for us to decide this important and keenly contested question; it will be sufficient to point out some of the prominent effects its exclusive cultivation had upon the minds of the learned for some centuries while it was held in estimation.

The *Platonic* and *eastern* systems of philosophy having been thus nearly driven off the field, and the learned having yielded an implicit obedience to the dictation of the Stagirite, they gave themselves up to nothing but contentious wrangling, which the perplexing subtilties necessarily connected with his logic, and the nature of the subjects of inquiry to which it was applied, were so well fitted to foster and perpetuate. It began to be taught almost universally in all the public schools and seminaries of learning; and it soon began to yield a plentiful harvest of its natural fruits—verbal quibbles, and endless sophistries. The general principles of natural and revealed religion, and moral science, became ingulfed in an accumulation of words without meaning, and in subtile and trifling distinctions on points of no earthly consequence whatever. The faculty of reason in men became darkened, and their moral sense blunted, by those incessant

wranglings and disputes; and every thing like correct notions on the nature and obligations of virtue, was, century after century, fast wearing away from the minds of both the learned and the unlearned.

Among the many ridiculous and unprofitable disputes which engaged the learned in these ages, it will be necessary we should here allude to the famous controversy which arose about the middle of the eleventh century, out of the abstruse subtilties of the Aristotelian philosophy. This controversy raged with great fierceness between the two contending parties, the *Realists*, and the *Nominalists*; and the reason for its being more particularly mentioned here is, that it generally finds a place in every academical course of lectures on moral subjects; and though not possessing such intrinsic merits as to entitle it to much attention, yet it has some claims to the notice of the moral student. Besides, the controversy has not been without its influence, even in modern times, over the speculations of several moral writers, who have embraced, in some cases, quite opposite theories; but the nature and degree of this influence cannot be pointed out at any length in this place.

It was laid down as a maxim in the school logic, that all our reasonings related to *universal ideas*;

that these were the *objects* or *materials* on which we exercised our reason; that *particular* things were liable to change, and could not therefore be permanent *objects* for immutable conclusions; but that the relations which subsisted between *universals* afforded the proper *objects* for logic. But the difficulty which was started was, whether these *universal ideas*, which were the elements of ratiocination, were *real objects*, or only *verbal denominations* given to certain things or notions. One party maintained that they were *real objects*; for if they were not *real*, then it would obviously follow that we would always be reasoning about matters which had no solid foundation. The other party as stoutly denied the *reality* of these *universal ideas*, and affirmed they were only *words* or *denominations* arbitrarily given to certain classes of thoughts or objects. The one party were denominated *Realists*, and the other *Nominalists*. The most celebrated writers of the former party at different periods of this dispute were, *Albertus Magnus*, *Thomas Aquinas*, and *Duns Scotus*; and of the latter the famous but unfortunate *Abelard*, *Occam*, &c. This controversy excited such attention, that even popes and monarchs engaged themselves in it. The university of Paris published an edict, in which

the tenets of the Nominalists were solemnly condemned, and ordered to be destroyed.

The moral writers, and commentators on the Scriptures, greatly multiplied towards the thirteenth century; and more correct and rational views seemed to be entertained as to the nature of morality and religion, and in regard to the manner of illustrating their principles. The leading writers at this period were divided into two parties; the one were called *schoolmen*, and the other *mystics*. The former treated of morals agreeably to the rules of logic, then in general use in all the schools and seminaries of learning; the latter despised all human ingenuity and art, and endeavoured to cultivate a spirit of piety, by forming habits of inward contemplation, and a devotional frame of mind. The *scholastic moralists* were extremely partial to abstract and refined speculations as to the nature and obligations of virtue, and of systematizing its rules and duties. They divided the virtues into two kinds or divisions; those which the light of nature was supposed to teach all men, and which are to be found in every system of heathen morality; and those which were taught exclusively in the Scriptures, and were in consequence termed *theological virtues*. These latter were founded upon the

interpretation which was then put on the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, and were denominated *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*. In explaining the distinctions between these two classes of virtues, a great deal of useless discussion was employed; but notwithstanding the cloud of words which obscured even the plainest matters, there was at this period a considerable improvement clearly perceptible over the preceding centuries, in treating of ethical questions, and of those leading theological doctrines which are so closely connected with them. *Thomas Aquinas*, by his great genius and learning took the lead in all those disputes which grew out of the doctrines and opinions to which we have now alluded.

It must also be noticed here that a great addition was made about the twelfth century, to the knowledge of the more abstract principles of moral science, by the introduction of the civil law, or jurisprudence, to the rank of one of the sciences. This was one of the great steps taken to bring about a more general knowledge of men's duty to one another in a state of society, and to examine and canvass those principles on which the social fabric rests. It has become the fashion among some philosophers of late date, to decry the value of the dis-

quisitions of civilians, and to lessen the merit of those who were the early instruments of making known sound and just principles of jurisprudence. But upon a careful inquiry into the advantages which mankind have derived from the early exposition of those civil maxims on which the laws of every intelligent community of human beings must rest, it will be found, that we are under great obligations to the writers in question for their skill and industry in this useful undertaking.

What contributed in no small degree to place the civil law among the number of sciences, and to excite a lively feeling for its general cultivation, was the discovery, about this time, of the famous *Pandect* of Justinian. This was a collection of rules and laws made by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, and commonly called the *Roman law*. The manuscript was lost for nearly six hundred years, but was found in the ruins of the city of *Melfi*, by Lotharius II., in the year 1137, and presented to the inhabitants of *Pisa*. The discovery of this valuable document gave rise to the erection of many colleges, for the very express purpose of studying this Roman system of jurisprudence. This law procured such extensive reputation, as to supersede all others; and the *Salic*, the *Lombard*,

and the *Burgundian* codes, which had been established for a long period, gradually gave way to its universal dominion.

The philosophy of Aristotle still maintained its supremacy up to the middle of the fifteenth century, when circumstances arose which favoured to a considerable extent the re-establishment of the doctrines of Plato. The downfal of the Grecian states by the invasion and conquests of the Mahometans, compelled the Greek literati to flee for protection to Italy; where they fortunately met with every degree of assistance and encouragement from the noble and munificent patrons of learning, the house of Medici, Alphonsus VI. king of Naples, and the other Neapolitan princes of the house of Arragon. The attention paid to these Greek philosophers naturally paved the way for the general dissemination of their peculiar tenets, and in the course of a very limited period, they made great inroads upon the quibbling and subtile philosophy of the Peripatetics. The doctrines of Plato seemed to have lost none of their charms during their long banishment from the seats of education and learning; but, on the contrary, they seem to have acquired new lustre, for their modern admirers were so enchanted with their sublimity, that they desig-

nated the maxims of the Grecian sage with the epithet of divine wisdom. Cosmo de Medici was so enraptured with them, that he founded an academy at Florence for the express purpose of teaching and propagating among the youth of that day the doctrines of Plato ;—and caused translations to be made of all the works of the most eminent of his disciples and followers. The Aristotelian and Platonic theories were thus placed in hostile array against each other, and nothing was to be heard in the sanctuaries of learning but violent disputes as to the comparative merits of the two systems.

But while the learned were discussing the principles and rules of moral obligation through the medium of opposite speculative tenets, the religious world in general seemed to be losing every just notion of the plain dictates and maxims of virtue. Instead of paying attention to the simple declarations of Scripture, and the important and explicit duties therein contained, every thing was viewed through the murky medium of scholastic learning and philosophical mysticism. Men were striving after the shadow, but neglected the substance ; they argued and contended about the nature of the sign, while they totally disregarded the thing signified. In consequence of this state of matters, practical morality fell into a very languishing state ; and from

the concurrent testimony of writers of every grade and party, we are fully authorized in maintaining the fact, that the two or three centuries which immediately preceded the Reformation, formed the most generally profligate and immoral period since the establishment of the Christian dispensation. To be a *pious* and *good* man, did not mean in those days one who attended to his duties to his Maker, to mankind, or to himself, as stated in the Scriptures, but one who should be well skilled in all the babbling sophistries of the day; one who should leave his riches to the priesthood, for the purpose of building churches, universities, and monasteries; and above all things, one who should submit to the implicit dictation, in all spiritual and moral matters, to the Roman pontiffs, or to those to whom he had immediately delegated his power and authority. Some really good and able men struggled hard against this tide of immorality and licentiousness, by dwelling upon the pure simplicity of the gospel truths, and the authority of the ancient fathers of the church; but these counsels were generally disregarded; or if noticed at all, it was only to brand their authors with the epithet of heretics, or to overwhelm them with a torrent of senseless jargon, which passed current in that age for the words of soberness and wisdom.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. THOMAS HOBBES OF MALMESBURY.

Mr. Hobbes was born at Malmesbury in Wiltshire, on the 5th of April, 1588. His father was vicar of West-port, within the liberties of Malmesbury, and of Charlton in Wilts; a man of but little learning, and in moderate circumstances. His mother's terror at the approach of the Spanish armada caused her premature delivery; an accident which many have supposed sufficient to account for that fearfulness of temper which characterised our author during his whole life; and which might also produce that delicate state of health which attended him till near his fortieth year, and which obliged him to practise those rules of temperance and exercise which no doubt contributed

very materially to prolong his life to the advanced period of ninety years.

At the age of eight years he was sent to the grammar school of Malmesbury, and in his fourteenth he was entered at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and continued there for five years, supported chiefly by his uncle, Francis Hobbes, then alderman of Malmesbury, and who at his death left him a small estate to enable him to remain at college. He took his batchelor's degree in 1607, and the next year was recommended by the Principal of the college as tutor to the son of Lord Hardwicke, afterwards Earl of Devonshire, whom he accompanied in his travels through France, Italy, and Germany.

In 1629, he published his translation of Thucydides, in one volume folio. He had kept this work a long time by him, and had submitted it to the revisal of his friends, Ben Jonson, and Sir Robert Ayton, then secretary to the consort of James I. By the death of his patron, he quitted the Devonshire family and went to Paris, where he remained till 1631, when he was recalled to England by invitation of the Dowager Countess of Devonshire, who wished to commit to his care the education of the young Earl, then only 13 years of age. In 1634 he set off with his pupil on a tour through

France, Italy, and Savoy; and during his visit to these countries, he formed an extensive acquaintance with many of the most distinguished writers and philosophers of the age, particularly with Galileo and Martin Mersenne, two very eminent men in their day. After remaining at Paris a few months, he returned with his pupil to England in 1637; and such was their regard for each other, that he resided in the Earl's family at Chatsworth, which he celebrated in a poem on the *Wonders of the Peak*, written some years before, but not published till about this time.

He now became immersed in those studies for which his travels in various countries in Europe, and his previous habits of thinking and reading, had afforded him ample materials, and which have principally contributed to his fame as a philosopher. In 1642 he printed privately at Paris a few copies of his book, *De Cive*, and distributed them among his friends. This publication brought him into distinguished notice by the learned men in that polite and intelligent city. A few years after, he published his little treatise "*On Human Nature.*" In the same year was published in London his "*De Corpore Politico,*" or "The Elements of Laws, Moral and Politic; with Discourses upon several

Heads; viz. the Law of Nature, Oaths and Covenants, several kinds of Government, with the Changes and Revolutions of them." This work was intended as a sequel to the treatise "*on Human Nature,*" and may for the most part be considered merely as an abridgment of his work "*De Cive.*" It is related that this book "*De Corpore Politico,*" was presented to Geissendi a few months before his death, when he kissed it, and added, "that book is certainly mean in size, but I guess 'tis full of marrow."

In 1651, he completed in Paris, and published in London, what had long been carefully digested, and on which he set a great value, viz. his "Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil;" a work which contained his whole metaphysical, moral, political, and religious principles. This publication created great alarm in Paris, on account of its attack upon the Romish Church, and Hobbes thought it prudent to quit that city and return to England, where, however, he seems to have entertained no less dread of the partizans of the king, who proscribed him from his court.

Hobbes spent the year of 1652 in London, cultivating the acquaintance of some of the most emi-

nent men of that day. The year after, he retired to the seat of the Earl of Devonshire, in Derbyshire, where he spent the greater part of his life in close application to study. About this time he also published his treatise "On Liberty and Necessity," which he had written eight years before in Paris, in the form of a letter to the Duke of Newcastle. Two years after, he published his "*De Corpore*," and dedicated the work to the Earl of Devonshire. This publication led him into a controversy with Dr. Wallis, which was carried on by both parties with much vigour and bitterness for upwards of twenty years. In 1658, he finished his "*De Homine*," and in 1674 he published his translation of the 9th, 11th, and 12th books of the Odyssey, though he was now in his 87th year. About the middle of October 1679, he became afflicted with a suppression of urine, a complaint which the physicians had no hopes of curing on account of his great age. On the 20th November, the Earl of Devonshire removed from Chatsworth to his seat at Hardwicke, a distance of ten miles; and Hobbes persisted in following him, though he could be carried only on a feather bed in a couch. He did not seem to be the worse of this exertion, but within six or seven days after, he lost the use

of speech and of his right side by a stroke of the palsy. He lay a few days in this state, taking little nourishment and sleeping much, and now and then endeavouring in vain to speak; but worn out with age, and not with pain, he gently breathed his last on the 4th of December the same year. He never was married.

"Mr. Hobbes," says Lord Clarendon, "is a man of excellent parts, of great wit, of some reading, and of somewhat more thinking; one who has spent many years in foreign parts and observations; understands the learned as well as modern languages; hath long had the reputation of a great philosopher and mathematician; and in his age hath had conversation with many worthy and extraordinary men. In a word, he is one of the most ancient acquaintances I have in the world; and of whom I have always had a great esteem, as a man who, besides his eminent learning and knowledge, hath been always looked upon as a man of probity, and of a life free from scandal."

Amongst all the writers on moral and political philosophy, which this or any other country has

produced, there is none who surpasses Mr. Hobbes in an extensive knowledge of human nature, or in that strength of judgment and logical acuteness with which he has unfolded that knowledge to others. Every person who will peruse his writings with care and application, will be fully convinced in his own mind that he brings into the discussion talents of the very first order. He dissects and analyzes with singular ease and dexterity, subjects in their nature of considerable complexity; and all his arguments, illustrations and deductions, are expressed in language, though occasionally coarse and vulgar, yet so plain, simple, and unaffected, that all his conceptions seem invested with the limpid purity of the pebbled brook.

The influence which his writings have exercised over the opinions and sentiments of subsequent writers on moral science, has been very extensive, and every way commensurate to the well known merit and celebrity of his works. By far the greater part of those writers who succeeded him a few years after, in the same field of inquiry, and whose systems will fall under our notice, in the regular order of succession, were either prompted to their undertakings by his reputation, or were desirous of coun-

teracting the supposed bad consequences of his opinions and principles. "The Philosopher of Malmesbury," says Dr. Warburton, "was the terror of the last age, as Tindal and Collins are of this. The press sweats with controversy; and every young churchman militant would try his arms in thundering on Hobbes's steel cap."* Every reader who is in the least degree acquainted with the state of moral science about the commencement of the seventeenth century, will readily acknowledge that the writings of Mr. Hobbes engrossed the almost undivided attention of all the most able and distinguished theoretical moralists of that period; and that, however they might differ from him, or however erroneous and dangerous they might conceive his writings to be, they always paid ample homage to his talents, and seemed at all times duly sensible that they were not contending with an antagonist of ordinary attainments, or of ordinary capacity. Indeed, amongst all his opponents, and they have by no means been few in number, or insignificant in merit, I know not one whose writings, taken in the gross, have any claim to be placed in competition with the higher qualifications of philosophical sagacity

* Divine Legation of Moses. Preface.

and acuteness, which are exhibited in the writings of the Philosopher of Malmesbury.

There has no writer on moral philosophy been more severely criticised, and, in my humble opinion, so generally misapprehended, than Mr. Hobbes. I must, for my own part, confess that for many years I was a slave to the most degrading and unworthy prejudices against his views and sentiments; and he was invariably connected in my mind with a gross vilifier of human nature, a subverter of all sound morality and religion, an advocate of civil tyranny and oppression, and one who was to be considered only in the light of an idle but ingenious dealer in empty sophisms and trifling paradoxes. And I have no doubt but this, even now, is the prevailing train of thought respecting the character of his works, of nearly nine-tenths of those who have made the speculative principles of morality a leading branch of their general studies. But I feel confident that a calm and dispassionate perusal of his writings, and a careful attention to his language and principles, particularly in his *Leviathan*, which contains the digested views of his riper years and understanding, will produce a change more favourable to his reputation and character. We will soon feel interested in his writings, and acknowledge the

power he has of fixing the attention, and calling into exercise the reasoning faculties of his reader. We will speedily be convinced of the expansive grasp of his mind, and feel delighted by those extensive and accurate views of human nature presented to our notice, and which have not been obtained from, or decked out by, the written opinions and language of preceding authors, but drawn from the fresh and inexhaustible fountain of his own vigorous and original powers of thought.

But though I am wishful to pay what I conceive to be a just claim to his general merits as a philosopher, I am by no means prepared to go so far as to maintain that his whole system is true and perfect in all its parts, or that he has not advanced principles, and made use of observations and arguments which lie fairly open to criticism and censure. But I do say, that in proportion as his works are carefully studied, and the principles of his system examined with candour and impartiality, in the same degree will we feel disposed to lessen the number of his speculative errors, and to acknowledge that these form but a very slender proportion indeed to the great mass of useful truths, and just and striking remarks, found in his writings on those topics of universal interest, which he has ven-

tured to discuss. Taking into account the state of moral and political philosophy, at the period when Mr. Hobbes appeared upon the arena of public disputation; taking into account the habits of his life, the society in which he generally moved, his strong predilection for monarchical principles of government, the disorders of the state at that time, and the personal trials and inconveniences which he himself suffered in consequence of these disorders; and above all, taking into consideration the peculiar nature of his genius, being that of a bold and adventurous character, and possessing an inquisitive enthusiasm which feared nothing, and was inclined at all times to push principles to their utmost limits; considering, I say, all these things, I do maintain that he is a monument of wonder, and we should feel surprise rather than regret that his errors have been so few in number, and so trifling in their nature.

I am free, nevertheless, to confess, that were I asked the question, (and when we consider what has been advanced against him, it would be by no means an inappropriate one), whether Mr. Hobbes' writings are, taken as a whole, likely to exercise an unfriendly influence over the mind, if made exclusive objects of attention; I would have no hesitation in saying, that such an unfriendly influence

might be possible. But I am decidedly of opinion, that this equivocal tendency arises not so much from the falseness or paradoxical nature of his general principles, as from his manner of illustrating them. He has deepened, in many cases, the shade of his positions with a darker hue than there was any necessity to do. We often find persons in common life, who have a sort of natural inclination to look always at the dark side of human nature, and to throw a murky haziness and gloom over almost every active moral principle of human life; but though this is acknowledged to be an imperfection in our moral constitution, and is always more or less apt to be productive of unpleasant consequences, both to ourselves and others; yet our censure of such an imperfection is grounded not so much upon the false nature of the principles of which these gloomy and misanthropic colourings are descriptive, but upon the habit of making them constant objects of our attention. Now there are, amongst philosophers, similar habits of thinking. Some lean more to the dark and gloomy side, while others launch into rhapsodical eulogiums upon the superlative dignity and purity of human nature; and we will find, in nine cases out of ten, that the leading principles upon which both theorists pro-

ceed in their reasonings and conclusions, are nearly allied to each other, and are not unfrequently precisely the same. The truth of this observation will, I think, be fully established, when we come to look at some of the principal moral theories which will fall under our review in the subsequent parts of this work.

It would be very inconvenient to give a complete outline or analysis of all Mr. Hobbes' writings relating to human nature, as this plan would lead to a very extended discussion. He seemed to be fond of splitting up and dividing his principles and system into short and detached publications; and of showing them to the world in various garbs or dresses, for the purpose of attracting more attention. All his leading principles of moral and political philosophy, to the development and examination of which these few pages will be directed, may be found in his works, "*De Cive*," "*On Human Nature*," and particularly in his "*Leviathan*." These contain every thing of importance in his character of a moral writer; and it is to the views contained in these works, that what is here advanced is more particularly directed.

There are four different aspects in which Mr. Hobbes, as a writer on human nature, may be

viewed, namely, as a metaphysician, as a moralist, as a political philosopher, and as a theologian. To touch upon the first and the last character, does not come properly within the plan of this work; nevertheless, as Mr. Hobbes' publications are not likely to fall into the hands of general readers, I purpose making an exception here to the usual course I have chalked out for myself; and will make a few remarks upon our author's classification of mental phenomena; and also upon his views of the leading principles of theology, both natural and revealed, on which there has commonly prevailed a considerable diversity of opinion.

The great principle of metaphysical philosophy, which Mr. Locke has illustrated, at much length, in his Essay on the Human Understanding,—*that all our ideas are derived through the medium of the senses,* is, in Mr. Hobbes' *Leviathan,* clearly laid down. In the first chapter on *Man,* we have this important truth stated in the following terms: "Concerning the thoughts of man, I will consider them first *singly,* and afterwards in *train,* or dependence upon one another. Singly, they are every one a representation or appearance of some quality, or other accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an *object,*—which object

worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of man's body; and by diversity of working, produceth diversity of appearances.

"The original of them all is that which we call SENSE; (for there is no conception in a man's mind, which doth not at first, totally, or by parts, bear together upon the organs of sense). The rest are derived from that original.

"To know the natural cause of sense, is not very necessary to the business now in hand; and I have also written of the same at large. Nevertheless, to fill each part of my present method, I will briefly deliver the same in this place.

"The cause of sense, is to the external body, or object, which presseth the organ proper to each sense, either immediately, as in the taste and touch; or mediately, as in seeing, hearing, and smelling; which pressure, by the mediation of the nerves, and other strings, membranes of the body, continued inwards to the brain and heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart to deliver itself; which endeavour, because *outward*, seemeth to be some matter without. And this *seeming* or *fancy*, is that which men call *sense*; and consisteth, as to the eye, in a *light* or *colour*, or *figure;* to the ear in a *sound;*

to the nostril in an *odour;* to the tongue and palate in a *savour;* and to the rest of the body in *heat, cold, hardness, softness,* and such other qualities as we discern by *feeling.* All which qualities, called *sensible,* are in the object that causeth them but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed, are they any thing else but divers motions; (for motion produceth nothing but motion.) But their appearance to us is fancy, the same waking that dreaming. And as pressing, rubbing, or striking the eye, making us fancy a light; and pressing the ear produceth a din; so doth bodies also we see and hear, produce the same by their strong though unobserved action. For if those colours and sounds were in the bodies, or objects that cause them, they could not be severed from them, as by glasses and echos of reflection we see they are; where we know the thing we see is in one place the appearance in another; and though at some certain distance, the real and very object seems invested with the fancy it begets in us, yet still the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another. So that sense in all cases is nothing else but original fancy, caused (as I have said) by the pressure, that is, by the motion of external things

upon our eye, ears, and other organs thereunto ordained." *

Every reader will here perceive by one glance, from the above extract, the principles which pervade the celebrated essay of Mr. Locke; particularly the discussions in that work on the secondary qualities of matter. Indeed this quotation from Mr. Hobbes, with some trifling alterations, might stand very well, though published thirty-seven years before, as a preface or introduction to the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

I think it quite evident, that the modern doctrine of the association of ideas is explicitly treated of by Mr. Hobbes. One of the important faculties of the mind, he says, is imagination, which, however, he considers only as a branch or species of the general faculty of memory. "For, as at a great distance of place that which we look at appears dim, and without distinction of the smaller parts; and as voices grow weak and inarticulate; so also, after great distance of time, our imagination of the past is weak; and we lose (for example) of cities we have seen, many particular streets, and of actions, many particular circumstances. This *decay-*

* Leviathan, pp. 3 and 4.

ing sense, when we would express the thing itself, (I mean *fancy* itself,) we call *imagination*, as I said before; but when we would express the *decay*, and signify that the sense is fading, old, and past, it is called *memory*. So that *imagination* and *memory* are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names." * He then goes on, in the next chapter, to treat of the *trains of imagination;* and no one who carefully peruses this part of the work, but will perceive the principle on which the comparatively recent doctrine of association is founded.

The next and last important faculty of the mind which Mr. Hobbes mentions is that of *Reason;* and this he defines to be "nothing but reckoning (that is adding and subtracting) of the consequences of general names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts; I say *marking* them, when we reckon by ourselves, and *signifying* when we demonstrate or approve our reckonings to other men." †

The moral speculations of Mr. Hobbes are so closely interwoven with his political disquisitions, that it becomes difficult to separate them. But we

* Leviathan, p. 5. † Ibid. p. 18.

will, however, notice in as brief a manner as possible, what were his notions of moral good and evil, and these he defines to be,—" Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire ; that is it which he for his part calleth *good;* and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil;* and of his contempt, *vile* and *inconsiderable.* For these words of *good* and *evil,* and *contemptible,* are even used with relation to the person that useth them : there being nothing simply and absolutely so ; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves ; but from the person of the man, (where there is no commonwealth,) or (in a commonwealth,) from the person that representeth it ; or person or arbitrator, or judge whom man, disagreeing, shall by consent set up, and make his sentence the rule thereof."

Now here, I conceive, is one of the many instances where Hobbes has laid himself open to controversy, from a loose and an indefinite mode of expression. From this passage, readers in general might be apt to infer, that by the phrase,— " *not a common rule of good and evil,*" the distinctions between virtue and vice were altogether

* Leviathan, p. 24.

of a fictitious and uncertain nature. But it appears to me, that the author merely means that morality can have no existence separated or abstracted from human nature; or, in other words, that the objects of good and evil, when viewed distinct and apart, if this be possible, from the being to whom they relate, have nothing in themselves which ought to entitle them to be designated by us as praiseworthy or reprehensible. This interpretation is, I think, fully borne out by the words seemingly incidentally inserted, that where there is no regularly established government of any description, the rule of right and wrong is recognised, and becomes the object of ultimate appeal "*from the person of the man himself.*"

Mr. Hobbes distinguishes good into three kinds: good in the promise, good in the effect, and good in the means; and the same of evil. His classification of our moral feelings, passions, and desires, is very concise and expressive; and is in every respect as perfect as any which has been produced by subsequent writers.

Our author was a strict necessitarian, and every reader of his works will recognise how largely Hume and others who advocate the same doctrine, opposed to our moral liberty, are indebted

to Mr. Hobbes for their principles and their arguments.

We come now to the most important division of Mr. Hobbes' speculations—those which relate to the principles on which the social system of any country is founded; and it is from the manner in which he has treated this part of his subject, that the greater portion of the opposition which his views have met with, has arisen. He considers the natural condition of men, without any civil government, to be perfectly equal amongst each other; that is, though there may be found in the various members of the human race a difference in bodily strength, a difference in mental qualifications, and in prudent sagacity and courage; yet this disparity, considered in their aggregate capacity, is so trifling, so insignificant when viewed in relation to a great multitude of people, that we are bound not to admit it as an element into our reasonings on the subject; but that we are warranted in stating the general proposition, that all men in a state of nature are equal. From this nearly perfectly equal condition proceed diffidence, distrust, and jealousies amongst individuals. All possess the inherent desire to better their lot, but all cannot enjoy the same benefits, pleasures, and privileges. Hence

this personal aggrandizement, this perpetual craving for those things to which all have an equal right with ourselves, is a powerful predisposing cause of war, and every man begins to employ those means which he thinks most calculated to preserve his own existence, and procure for him as large a share of power or of comfort as he can obtain, by force or persuasion, threats or contrivance. Competition, diffidence, and love of distinction or power, form the elements of discord and strife; "the first maketh men invade for gain, the second for safety, and the third for reputation. They first use violence to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second to defend them; the third for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, or any other sign of under-value, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name."*

After thus establishing the natural equality of men, he lays down what he considers the laws of nature, which he looks upon as the sum of moral philosophy. The consent of the majority is the commencement of a city; which, in its legislative

* Leviathan, p. 62.

capacity, becomes as one person, whose will or pleasure, by the consent of the greater number, is to be considered as the will or pleasure of all. No man submits his natural liberty to another, but for the sake of personal security, that no opinions be promulgated which have a direct or indirect effect to weaken or impair the supreme power or disturb the public peace. A prince may, by right, that is, without injury, do what he may think fit, only he cannot do it justly, but if done, it must be at the expense of a breach of the laws of nature. The sovereign power, of whatever nature it may be, cannot by right be disannulled by the general consent by which it was created. The king, whose power is limited, is no king. Every individual injury is a breach of the social contract. No promise given by a sovereign power is invested with moral validity, if the performance of it should tend to cripple or impair that power. Every thing is lawful to those who are in bonds, for all political obligation is derived from the social contract, and the faith which is not given cannot be broken. The expense of all civil liberty consists in being under the control or restraint of some arbitrary power, but not of such a nature as to throw absolute impediments in the

way. The benefits and evils of all kinds of governments are common to both the rulers and the people. It is a great grievance when a prince exacts unnecessary taxes, or puts the innocent to death; but it is a grievance, not because it may be done, but because it is done. Commonwealths are only so many camps. The scriptures intimate that political governments were derived from the consent of the people; and that the person or persons in whom the sovereign power is invested are by right exempt from all punishment. *The safety of the people is the supreme law.* Those who exercise the sovereign power of a state for any other purpose than for the safety and welfare of the people at large, do that which is politically wrong, that is, violate the laws of nature. Taxes or imposts should be regulated by what people spend, and not by what they gain. The liberty of a subject may be defined to be that part of natural right which is left to subjects by the civil laws. People ought to enjoy, without fear or molestation, those rights which are secured and guaranteed by the law. Law is the command of that person or persons whose precept contains within itself the reason for obedience. They confound law and covenant who

conceive laws to be only forms of living determined by common consent of men.*

It has generally formed a principal objection against Hobbes' system, that he endeavours to make man an entirely artificial creature, and that little or no allowance is made for the operation of those instinctive or innate principles of justice and rectitude on which what are called the laws of nature are grounded. And certainly, this is an objection very likely to arise in the minds of those who do not look very closely to his language; for he has generally dwelt too long upon what may be termed the artificial machinery of society, and thrown the elementary principles of human nature too much into the back ground. But it is not correct to say, as some writers affirm, that he denies the existence of any such innate principles of justice and equity, as other authors generally admit; on the contrary, he has, in a great many parts of his works, openly and explicitly recognised them; and in almost all his reasonings on political morality, he sufficiently shows, that these principles formed the elements of all his conclusions. Hobbes observes that, "The law of nature and the civil law contain each other, and are of equal extent. For the laws of nature,

* See "*De Cive*," and "*Leviathan*."

which consist in equity, justice, gratitude, and other moral virtues on these depending, in the condition of mere nature, are not properly laws, but qualities which dispose men to peace and obedience." "The law of nature, therefore, is a part of the civil law in all commonwealths in the world. Reciprocally, also, the civil law is a part of the dictates of nature. For justice, that is to say, performance of covenants, and giving to every man his own, is a dictate of the law of nature." "If it be a law that obliges all the subjects, without exception, and is not written, nor otherwise published, in such places as they may take notice thereof, it is a law of nature. For, whatsoever men are to take knowledge of for laws not upon other men's words, but every one from his own reason, must be such as is agreeable to the reason of all men; which no law can be but the law of nature. The laws of nature, therefore, need not any publishing nor proclamation, as being contained in this one sentence, approved by all the world, *Do not that to another which thou thinkest unreasonable to be done by another to thyself.*"

The fundamental principle on which the whole of Mr. Hobbes' reasoning on a commonwealth proceeds, is this,—that all men in a state of nature are equal. Now, I consider this principle to be the

foundation of every system of civil liberty; nor can there be any rational scheme of social policy maintained, except by the clearly expressed and unqualified recognition of this maxim. Instead, therefore, of this principle of equality, so frequently and so fully insisted on by Mr. Hobbes, being of an objectionable nature, and calculated to give us erroneous and pernicious views of human society, and of the nature of man; it proves a principle of immense importance to all our reasonings, whether considered in relation to the government of a country, or to the private conduct of individuals in social life. The perfect equality of man in a state of mere nature must form the basis of all systems of legislation which can lay any pretensions to the character of being sound and liberal, or at all calculated to secure those objects for which all governments are supposed to be formed, the happiness and welfare of the great body of the nation. However despotic in theory or tyrannically exclusive the laws of any country may be found to operate in practice, no people who are advanced a single step from the rude state of nature, but who would immediately manifest a disposition to insubordination, and an endeavour to throw off their yoke of oppression, if it were formally made known to them that

the laws under which they live were grounded upon the distinct principle, that all the members of the community were not considered equal in the eye of the law of nature. It is one of the tributes which liberty extorts from despotism, that the latter is obliged to cover her proceedings with the mantle of the former.

On the most objectionable of all Hobbes' positions, that mankind in a state of nature are in a state of warfare, little, I conceive, need be said. Viewing the principle in the light in which I think he viewed it, namely, *not* as wishing to deny the existence of some primary seeds of moral virtue in the savage breast, but only as descriptive of that general ferocity and depravity of manners which we every day see so conspicuously pourtrayed in the conduct of the uncultivated wanderers of the forest, there does not appear to be the slightest foundation for those innumerable misrepresentations and misapprehensions, to which this declaration of our author has, for nearly a couple of centuries, given rise, amongst many moral writers of distinguished reputation. It is perfectly in accordance with our common notions of the general nature and design of governments, that anarchy and confusion, strife and bloodshed, are the inevitable concomitants of

the want of social order and wholesome laws. If there be any one truth more closely or obviously connected with human nature than another, it is, that wherever such a relaxation of the laws of any community has occurred as to weaken the bonds of union between the governors and the governed, then the evil passions of man become excited; cruelty and rapine mark every step of their progress; and all history justifies the epithets which Hobbes has heaped upon his species, that they resemble ferocious beasts rather than human beings. We are taught from our infancy to reverence the laws of our country, to pay the most implicit obedience to them, even if that obedience should be accompanied with considerable personal trouble and inconvenience; and solely upon the ground, that it is dangerous to weaken the power of the laws, lest we excite the angry passions of men, and give them an opportunity to exercise all those malevolent propensities which we know are locked up and kept from observation, by the force of social institutions, but which, when that force becomes weakened, manifests themselves in acts of violence, which could not be exceeded in atrocity in the most barbarous and uncivilized state of human existence. Instead, therefore, of its being a libel on mankind

that a state of nature is a state of warfare, this opinion is strictly in accordance with all our familiar and important notions and maxims respecting the value of laws and the end and object of civil society.

These few remarks apply in substance to those observations which occur in several places of Mr. Hobbes' writings, where he maintains even society itself is, comparatively speaking, a state of warfare. "It may seem strange to some man that has not well weighed these things, that nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade and destroy one another; and he may, therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him, therefore, consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; and even in his house he locks his chests; and this, when he knows there be laws and public officers armed, to revenge all injuries that shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects when he rides armed; of his fellow-citizens when he locks his doors, and of his children and servants when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse men's

nature in it. The desires and other passions of men, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them; when, till laws be made, they cannot know; nor can any law be made till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it." "But though there never had been any time, wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another; yet in all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a picture of war. But because they uphold thereby the industry of their subjects, there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men."*

These quotations call for some particular notice; but as Mr. Hobbes' principles are more nearly allied to those of several moral writers whose systems have obtained more popularity and celebri-

* Leviathan, p. 69.

ty, and which we will be called on to examine in the subsequent parts of this work, I will defer making any remarks upon the opinions and sentiments just now quoted, as they would only in substance have to be repeated afterwards.

As a writer on civil jurisprudence, Hobbes is fairly entitled to hold a prominent station. It is a fact well worthy of notice, that *Grotius'* famous treatise "*On War and Peace,*" was published only seventeen years before our author's book, "*De Cive ;*" and there is every reason to believe that these publications were written and sent forth to the world without any previous knowledge of either party's intentions. *Puffendorf* also published his thoughts on the same subject about twenty years after the works of *Hobbes* and *Grotius* were known all over Europe; and he openly declares that he had received great assistance from the intellectual labours of the former author. When, therefore, we reflect upon the circumstance of all these three eminent men making their appearance in the republic of letters nearly at the same period of time, and endeavour to form some general conception of the importance of their labours, and of the great influence which the writings of the two foreigners, in particular, have exercised over the

external as well as internal policy of every country in the world where any thing like a rational system of civil liberty prevails, we will not fail to pay the just homage of praise to our own countryman, nor overlook the remarkable coincidence of his having been one of these original propounders of opinions and principles, which have exerted such a marked and beneficial influence over the interests of man, and which must always form the basis of every intelligible plan of civil jurisprudence, wherever it may be established.

We will now make a passing remark or two upon that part of the writings of Mr. Hobbes which contain his religious opinions. Here again his views have been differently interpreted by those who have commented upon his works. By some he has been even accused of atheism, and by others considered as a Christian of the most orthodox faith. Bishop Cumberland adduces a few solitary sentences on which he lays much stress, and on which he endeavours to ground the accusation of Hobbes countenancing atheistical principles; but these sentences are so few in number, and are interpreted in such a forced manner, that they are entirely unworthy of any serious notice. I agree with those who hold the opinion of his Christian orthodoxy. I

think the most careless of Hobbes' readers, and those who are ever so strongly prejudiced against his moral and political creed, will not accuse him of acting the part of a hypocrite, at least in those matters relating to religion. There is a conspicuous vein of sincerity running through the whole of his writings; and in none is this sincerity more evident than in those which bear upon the leading doctrines and principles of the Christian system. His views of human nature did not require that he should give any peculiar interpretation of the doctrines of Scripture, for the ulterior purpose of bolstering up any of his theories of morals or legislation.

His principal treatise of a theological character is included in his book "*Laviathan*," and is entitled "*Of a Christian Commonwealth.*" He here enters into the consideration of the general principles of Christian politics; and endeavours to show that the Scriptures, as a whole, are to be our sole guide in making and laying down laws for the government of any theological establishment. "Nevertheless," says he, "we are not to renounce our senses and experience; nor, (that which is the undoubted word of God,) our natural reason. For they are the talents which he has put into our

hands to negociate, till the coming again of our blessed Saviour; and therefore not to be folded up in the napkin of an implicit faith, but employed in the purchase of justice, peace, and true religion. For though there be many things in God's word above reason, that is to say, which cannot by natural reason be either demonstrated or confuted, yet there is nothing contrary to it; but when it seemeth so, the fault is either in our unskilful interpretation, or erroneous ratiocination.

"Therefore, when any thing therein written is too hard for our examination, we are bidden to captivate our understanding to the words; and not to labour in sifting out a philosophical truth by logic, of such mysteries as are not comprehensible, nor fall under any rule of natural science. For it is with the mysteries of our religion, as with whole pills for the sick, which swallowed whole, have the virtue to cure; but chewed, are, for the most part, cast up again without effect." *

His religious views contained in his "*De Cive*," and "*Leviathan*," so far as they are brought forward to strengthen his fame and political system, may be briefly summed up in the following terms:

* Leviathan, p. 195.

Though God governs men by his power, that none can do any thing which he did not desire to have done, yet this is not properly to reign; for to rule by commands and threatenings, and not by acting, is to reign. And under this light, we are to consider inanimate and irrational things, atheists, and those who think that God does not govern or control these inferior things, as not subjects of his kingdom, because they do not recognise his commands, though at the same time they are subordinate to his power. The highest and purest act of devotion is to use our best efforts to observe the laws of nature; for to undervalue a master's commands, is the greatest of affronts; and obedience becomes more acceptable than any other sacrifice. The sovereign powers have alone the right to determine what doctrines are to be held and professed concerning the nature of the deity, and also of what mode of worship shall be practised amongst the people. The predictions of almost all the prophets foretel the event obscurely and enigmatically; and for this reason, that they saw not God plainly as Moses did, but in dark speeches and emblematical figures. That the interpretation of God's commands belonged to the high priest, and in proof of this we find, that after

the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were consecrated, God spake no more in Mount Sinai, but from the tabernacle, from the propitiatory which was between the cherubims; whither it was not lawful for any to approach except the High Priest. Though our Saviour was as to his nature equal to the Father, yet in office he was only viceroy. Scripture is a dead letter except it be understood; the word, therefore, of a lawful interpreter of Scripture is the word of God; but that interpreter, whose determination has the honour to be held for the word of God, must be a canonical interpreter, whose legitimate province it is to determine controversies of faith. No foreign person can have an authority for interpreting Scripture; this must belong to the sovereign to the city; for man necessarily choose to obey those by whose judgment they believe they shall be eternally happy or miserable. Definition is prejudicial to faith; for those things which exceed the powers of the human mind are never made more evident by explanation.

Mr. Hobbes seems always to have felt very sorely when charged by his adversaries with atheism and impiety; and it is only doing his memory an act of justice to state what he advances himself upon the utter groundlessness of these charges. In

his dedication to the King of his "*Seven Philosophical Problems*," published in 1662, he thus defends himself against the attacks which many of the clergy had made upon him. "I will not break the custom of joining to my offering a prayer; and it is, that your majesty will be pleased to pardon this following short apology for my Leviathan; not that I rely upon apologies, but upon your majesty's most gracious general pardon. That which is in it of theology contrary to the general current of divines is not put there as my opinion, but propounded with submission to those who have the power ecclesiastical,—I did never after, either in writing or discourse, maintain it. There is nothing in it against episcopacy; I cannot therefore imagine what reason any episcopal man can have to speak of me as I hear some of them do; as of an athiest, or a man of no religion; unless it be for making the authority of the church depend wholly upon the regal power; which I hope your majesty will think neither atheism nor heresy. But what had I to do to meddle with matters of that nature, seeing that religion is not philosophy, but law? It was written in a time when the pretence of Christ's kingdom was made use of for the most horrid actions that can be imagined; and it was in just indigna-

tion of that, that I desired to see the bottom of that doctrine of the kingdom of Christ, which divers ministers then preached for a pretence for their rebellion; which may reasonably extenuate, though not excuse the writing of it. There is therefore no ground for so great a calumny in my writing; there is no sign of it in my life; and for my religion, when I was at the point of death at St. Germains, the Bishop of Durham can bear witness of it, if he be asked. Therefore I most humbly beseech your sacred majesty not to believe so ill of me, upon reports that proceed often, (and may do so now) from the displeasure which commonly ariseth from difference in opinion; nor to think the worse of me, if snatching up all the weapons to fight against your enemies, I lighted upon one that had a double edge." *

* "The charge of *atheism* has been so much hackneyed in religious controversy, as to have passed almost into ridicule. It was the common charge against the primitive Christians, and has hardly ever failed to be urged, on one pretence or another, against every man who has dissented from the generally received faith. But perhaps no character has suffered more generally, and at the same time more undeservedly, on this account, than that of Mr. Hobbes; who, notwithstanding his heterodoxy in politics, appears to me, as far as I can judge from such of his writings as have fallen in my way, to have been no atheist, but a sincere Christian, and a conscientious good man. See his life in the *Biographica Britannica*." *Priestley's Correspondence with Dr. Price, Preface, p.* 25.

I find, however, a different opinion entertained by a high authority

In conclusion, I would say, estimating the works of Hobbes from their general scope and bearing, and not from individual or insulated passages, that there is nothing in them decidedly hostile to good morals, civil liberty, or sound religion. Many circumstances have conspired to throw a cloudy haziness over his name and reputation, and to induce a contrary opinion amongst a considerable portion of ethical writers; but when we come to make due allowance for the heated zeal which results from political feuds and religious bigotry, we will be better able to draw aside the veil of misrepresentations which has so long hid his merits from public view. His popularity has suffered from two principal circumstances. In the *first* place, he incurred, by his attachment to the cause of Charles the First, and by the general tone of his political writings, the ill-will and hatred of all those who were struggling for national freedom, and who at that time could not endure the slightest opposition; and by his religious speculations, he rendered himself obnoxious to the catholic party, whose religion he ridiculed with

in literature. "Hobbes and Locke, who maintained the selfish theory of morals, lived irreproachable lives; though the former lay not under any restraint of religion which might supply the defects of his philosophy." *Hume's Inquiry respecting the Principles of Morals, p.* 331.

great coarseness and severity. The united hostility of these two formidable bodies followed him to the termination of his earthly career; and long after his death, his writings continued to be the topic of general animadversion by authors of very opposite moral and political views, who had followed in the wake of Hobbes' immediate cotemporaries, and who had imbibed a considerable portion of that party and angry spirit which more turbulent and troublesome times had created. Added to all this, the scarcity of his books, some of which seem to have been published more for the gratification of his private friends than for general use. Several of them were also written in the Latin language, a circumstance which also contributed not a little to confine their knowledge within a narrow sphere. It has been justly observed by Mr. Stewart, that Hobbes' writings possess the rare merit of engrossing the reader's attention, and of exciting the mind to thought and reflection; an infallible sign, he adds, of a writer possessing original genius.

CHAPTER V.

A TREATISE CONCERNING ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE MORALITY.

DR. RALPH CUDWORTH.

RALPH CUDWORTH was born at Aller, in Somersetshire, in 1617, of which place his father was rector. He was early admitted a pensioner of Emanuel Hall, Cambridge; in which university he was matriculated in 1632. In 1642 he published "*a Discourse concerning the true Nature of the Lord's Supper.*" In 1654, he was chosen master of Christ's College, Cambridge; in which place he spent the remainder of his days. He published, in 1678, his great work "*On the true Intellectual System of the Universe;*" a work which has handed down his fame to posterity. He died in 1688, in the seventy-first year of his age. He left several books in manuscript, but one only has been printed since his death, namely, the one at the head of this essay.

The "Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality" was not published till 1732, long after the author's death. It was edited by Dr. Chandler, the then bishop of Durham. This work of Dr. Cudworth, is the only one published which professes to treat of morality as a distinct branch of science.

To furnish the reader with a key to understand the general nature and scope of all Dr. Cudworth's writings, his "Intellectual System," as well as the work immediately under notice, it will be necessary to make him acquainted with the leading purpose that the Doctor had in view, that of removing infidelity and scepticism. These he assumed rested solely upon the doctrine of necessity, "as upon their proper foundation." Whether this opinion, to maintain which his whole writings were directed, be true to the full extent, is a matter of no moment for us here to inquire. It is sufficient for our present purpose to know, that he considered the various uses to which the doctrine of philosophical necessity was generally applied as very prejudicial to the true interests of morality and religion.

The necessity against which he so strenuously contended, assumed, in his opinion, three different shapes or aspects. 1st. We have *material* or *na-*

tural fate, which entirely excludes all notions of Deity whatever, by supposing there is nothing in the universe but mere matter. 2d. The *theological* or *divine* necessity, which assumes the separate nature and existence of an intellectual Being, yet maintains that that Being has decreed and determined all things, whether good or evil, so that nothing could have been different from what we find it to be. 3d. The *stoical* fate, or necessity, affirmed that all things depended upon an eternal chain of causes and effects, proceeding necessarily from the first great Being, who had preordained every thing, so that there was nothing left to liberty or contingency.

The first, or *material necessity*, is discussed at great length in Dr. Cudworth's voluminous and learned work "On the Intellectual System of the Universe;" but the last two species of fate he has enumerated are but slightly alluded to in that performance. This treatise on immutable morality is intended to supply the place of the brief notice given to the *theological* and *stoical* fates in his principal publication.

We find Dr. Cudworth's principles laid down pretty fully in his second chapter in his "*Eternal Morality*." He says, "wherefore in the first place,

it is a thing which we shall very easily demonstrate, *that moral good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest,* (if they be not mere names without any signification, or names for nothing else but *willed* or *commanded,* but have a reality in respect of the persons obliged to do and avoid them,) *cannot possibly be arbitrary things made by will without nature;* because it is universally true, that things are what they are, not by *will,* but by *nature.* As, for example, things are white by whiteness, and black by blackness, triangular by triangularity, and round by rotundity; likeness by likeness, and equal by equality; that is, by such certain natures of their own. Neither can omnipotence itself (to speak with reverence) by mere will make a thing white or black, without whiteness or blackness; that is, without such certain natures, whether we consider them as qualities in the objects without us, according to the *peripatetic* philosophy, or as certain disposition of parts in respect to magnitude, figure, site, and motion, which beget these sensations or phantasms of white and black in us—or to instance in geometrical figures, *Omnipotence itself cannot by mere will* make a body triangular, without having the nature and properties of a triangle in it; that is, without having three angles equal to

two right ones, nor circular without the nature of a circle; that is, without having a circumference equidistant everywhere from the centre or middle point. Or lastly, to instance in things relative only, Omnipotent will *cannot* make things like or equal one to another, without the nature of likeness and equality. The reason whereof is plain, because all these things imply a manifest contradiction, that things should be what they are not; and this is a truth fundamentally necessary to all knowledge, that contradictories cannot be true; for otherwise nothing would be certainly true or false. New things may as well be made white or black by mere will, without whiteness or blackness, equal and unequal, with equality and unequality, as morally good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest, by mere will, without any nature of goodness, justice, honesty. For though the will of God be the supreme efficient cause of all things, and can produce into being or existence, or reduce into nothing what it pleaseth, yet it is not the formal cause of anything besides itself, as the schoolmen have determined, in these words, *that God himself cannot supply the place of a formal cause:* and, therefore, it cannot supply the formal cause or nature of *justice* or *injustice*, *honesty* or *dishonesty*.

Now all that we have hitherto said amounts to no more than this, that it is impossible anything should be by *will only*, that is, without a *nature* or *entity*, or that the nature and essence of anything should be arbitrary."*

This quotation may be said to contain the principles of Dr. Cudworth's system. The reader will perceive, that he maintains that good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest, cannot be things created by any will, even the will of the Deity; but must be such by *nature*. Every thing must be in its own nature what it really is, and can be nothing else. In positive laws and commands, it is not mere *will* which clothes them with moral validity, but the inward nature of these laws themselves. No positive laws can make a command either morally good or evil, otherwise than by nature of what is really *naturally* just.

As we will examine the truth of this doctrine at considerable length, in other parts of these volumes, it would be only tedious repetition to enlarge any further upon it here. It may, however, be merely remarked in passing, that the views which Dr. Cudworth seemed to entertain on the nature

* Treatise on Eternal Morality, p. 16.

of virtue, were grounded upon the notion that there was a complete and perfect analogy between the truths of mathematical science, and the truths in matters of morality. This opinion seems to have been firmly rivetted in his mind. His reasonings from this position, coupled with the sense in which he used the words *eternal* and *immutable* when applied to morality, form the ground-work of what *Bayle*, *Le Clerc*, *Shaftesbury*, and others, have advanced against his system; and gave them an opportunity of calling in question the orthodoxy of his opinions, and the utility of his writings, so far as the refuting of sceptics was concerned. But a sincere respect for his character and talents compels us to remark, that there is not the slightest foundation for suspecting the purity of his motives in coming forward as the champion of rational religion and sound morality.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAWS OF NATURE.

BISHOP CUMBERLAND.

RICHARD CUMBERLAND was born in London in the year 1632. He was removed to Magdalen College, Cambridge, in the year 1649. In the early part of life he entertained thoughts of embracing the medical profession, but relinquished that design, and entered into holy orders. In 1672, he published his treatise, entitled "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Laws of Nature," in quarto; a publication, which obtained for its author no small share of reputation He was made bishop by King William in 1691, the duties of which he discharged in a very exemplary manner. He died in 1718, in the eighty-seventh year of his age.

It may be considered as truly a matter of surprise to the moral reader, that a book such as Bishop

Cumberland's *Laws of Nature* should have been so little read or noticed by those who have instituted philosophical discussions on the principles of moral obligation; particularly when it is considered that this book exhibits a great portion of solid learning, a complete familiarity with the rules of moral evidence, and an accurate and minute acquaintance with all the general systems and principles of the science of morality. What may, perhaps, have contributed to render the book comparatively little known, was its first publication in the Latin language, a circumstance which would naturally enough confine its perusal to a few individuals only; but by its translation into English by Mr. Maxwell, a wider range was thus given to its circulation, which, however, seems to have been circumscribed within very narrow limits indeed, notwithstanding the high character of its author, and the philosophic and well-digested nature of the publication.

But before entering into the discussion on the "*Laws of Nature*," we may notice that there are appended to the Bishop of Peterborough's Treatise, two preliminary essays, the one entitled, "*The City or Kingdom of God, or the Defects of Heathen Deism*;" and the other on "The Imperfections of

Heathen Morality." In the former of these essays, the author, Mr. Maxwell, considers the various capacities of man as a physical, a mental, a moral, a sociable, and a religious being; and then goes on to examine the pagan system of the world, which was conducted by one supreme intellectual Head, called the soul of the universe. Rational agents were divided by the pagans into different sorts, each sort possessing faculties and powers, suited to the duties and offices it had to perform; but the whole, however, only comprising one grand political system. These intelligent agents were divided into six classes; namely, 1. The supreme God. 2. Subordinate gods invisible. 3. Visible. 4. Demons. 5. Heroes: and 6. Men. The Jewish nation, according to Cumberland, fell into the heathen notions concerning the government of the world, believing that their nation had a guardian angel, who could transact nothing, without the express permission from the divine providence. The Jews supposed that all other nations were committed to the care of these guardian angels, who possessed the power and executed the functions of gods. They believed also, that the air, the water, the fire, the hail, and the winds, had each its respective angel presiding over it; and that they assigned

seven president angels to the seven days of the week, twelve to the twelve months, four to the four seasons, and seven archangels to the planets for every nation, but Israelitish excepted, being subject to its own particular planet.

The author maintains the position, that the Jews were gross idolaters in many periods of their history. The Chaldeans, from amongst whom Abraham was taken, were a very idolatrous nation; and this is intimated by Joshua, who says, "Your fathers dwelt in the other side of the flood, in old times, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nehor, and they served other gods." But our author differs entirely from the writer of a book entitled, "*A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion;*" in which it is maintained, that the Jewish nation were idolaters when taken into captivity; that the Babylonians had, from the earliest antiquity, believed in the unity of the Deity; and that it was much more probable that the Jews, being captives, would imbibe their theological notions from their conquerors, than that the latter should conform to the opinions of the people they held in thraldom, which is the commonly received opinion on the subject. But the writer shows, that the conjectures of this au-

thor rest entirely upon a gratuitous assumption, unsupported by a single well-authenticated fact; and that the position, that the Chaldeans had a perfect knowledge of the only *one* living and true God, could not be maintained upon any creditable historical testimony whatever. Cumberland argues with much ingenuity and learning, that the knowledge of this important doctrine,—the unity and spirituality of the Deity, was possessed by the Jewish people exclusively; and that, therefore, the heathens knew not God, in the proper and true religious sense of knowing him. To bring man out of this natural spiritual darkness,—to show man the true nature of the divine government, and the grounds on which he could ever hope to see and enjoy Him, in a future state of existence, a revelation of his will was indispensably requisite, and this was accomplished at the time, and in the manner that the Scriptures themselves relate.

The Essay "*On the Imperfections of the Heathen Morality*" is well written, and full of curious information. The author enters at considerable length into the abstract opinions which the different sects of philosophers, the Stoics, Epicureans, and others, held on the notions of a Deity and Providence, and on the foundations on which these vari-

ous philosophical schools ground the obligations of morality. Into the tenets of the stoical system, which was founded upon the doctrine that virtue was the only good, he enters pretty fully; and after quoting the numerous opinions and sentiments from the most eminent of the Stoics, he finds the morality they teach extremely defective on account of the following reasons:—

1. By discarding all future rewards and punishments.

2. By ridiculing the fear of death; and allowing, nay, in some cases, enjoying self-murder.

3. By the Stoics denying pain to be an evil.

4. By their regal and happy estate, and self-sufficiency.

5. By their apathy, or indifference to pain or pleasure.

6. By their arrogance, with respect to the gods as well as men.

7. By their transcendentals, and extravagant passive obedience to the divine will.

8. By their monstrously absurd conceits.

9. By their general and gross immoralities.

The Epicurean morality, built upon the principle, that all happiness is derived from the body alone, our author considers as destructive of all moral

obligation, virtue, honesty, and religion. The opinions of the heathen philosophers on what was right and praiseworthy, were not less objectionable, and subversive of all real piety; and a review of the whole system of moral philosophy prior to the introduction of the Christian dispensation, is calculated to teach us that men know not the extent of moral duty, or the true reasons why these duties became obligatory upon mankind. This essay closes with a few very judicious and well expressed observations on the mutual assistance which reason and revelation afford to each other.

"Some cry up *reason, and the light of nature,* at such a rate, as to think them alone *all-sufficient guides,* in consequence of which they think all revelation useless and unnecessary, whose mistake I have at large endeavoured to show, and that they who wanted revelation, were sensible of their being at a loss in most important points for want of it. *Others,* with a mistaken view of magnifying revelation and faith, undervalue and vilify *reason* and the *light of nature* most immoderately, as if they were *no proper guides at all,* nor fit to be trusted, *in divine matters and the truths of God.* But if that were the case, how should we ever come to the knowledge of God at all? So it is

plain St. Paul thought, by the passages just now quoted from him. The *belief* of a revelation is grounded upon the veracity of God the revealer, and we must first be convinced by reason of the *veracity* of God, (that he is omniscient, and cannot be deceived, that he is perfectly good, and cannot deceive,) before we can give a firm assent to a revelation as coming from him. So the knowledge of the being and attributes of God, are previously necessary to the belief of a revelation. *Socinus*, indeed, held, that we can no otherwise come to the knowledge of God but by revelation; but those who have followed him in other matters, have been wise enough to drop him upon that head. Beside, without making use of reason in divine matters, how should we be able to judge of a revelation, or a miracle, and distinguish the true from the false? Or how shall we judge of the meaning of a revelation, when we have it? Without applying our reason to the discussion of matters revealed, how should we come to know, that these words, '*This is my body*,' are not to be taken in a literal sense, or those other words, '*if thine eye offend thee pluck it out?*' We must, therefore, either use our reason in the study of the scriptures, or we have no reason to study them

at all; nor need we fear any evil consequences from such a practice. For all the doctrines of revelation, when freed from the errors of the mistaken, and the imposition of the designing, part of its votaries, and taken as they stand in the scriptures themselves, free from all human figments and unwarrantable deductions, will stand the test of reason. Nor do I know a more disadvantageous idea, that can be given to the Christian religion, than to decry the use of reason in matters belonging thereunto; for does not that plainly seem to imply, that it is an unreasonable scheme, as being what will not stand the test of reason? Several points there are, indeed, in it, which we cannot comprehend, which yet, that they are so, we have very good reason to believe, though we cannot solve all difficulties or answer all objections, that may be started about them; no more than we can explain all the difficulties that occur about *self-existence, eternity,* and *immensity,* which yet, we are very certain, are attributes that belong to some being that really exists. Such are the difficulties about the *infinite divisibility of space,* which yet is demonstrated, and those about liberty, of which, however, we have the same proof that we have of our own consciousness."

On entering upon the most important part of his undertaking—that of inquiring into the *laws of nature*, the bishop has introduced the leading topics of discussion by a chapter, "Of the nature of things." Here we find the frame-work of his system—the foundation of all his leading principles. He defines the law of nature to be, "Certain propositions of unchangeable truth, which direct our voluntary actions, about choosing good, and refusing evil; and impose an obligation to external actions, even without civil laws, and laying aside all consideration of those compacts which constitute civil government: That some such truths are, from the nature of things and of men, necessarily suggested to the minds of men, and by them understood and remembered, (whilst the faculties of their minds continue unhurt) and that therefore they really exist there. This is what we affirm, and our said adversaries as expressly deny." Our author endeavours to show that the whole of moral philosophy is finally resolvable into a knowledge of nature, and that we must prosecute this science in the same manner, as we would do natural philosophy—by direct and well conducted observations and experiments. But it is not necessary we should

examine all the relations of matter and motion, and the whole system of the universe, in order that we should obtain true and correct notions of what the laws of nature are; but our inquiries may be limited to a single object, that of explaining one general law of nature from whence all other particular laws are deduced. This general law is expressed in the following. "The greatest benevolence of every rational agent towards all, forms the happiest state of every and of all the benevolent, as far as is in their power; and it is necessarily requisite to the happiest which they can attain, *and therefore the common good is the supreme law.*"

The Bishop endeavours to prove that the existence of this principle or law of nature is supported by the same degree of evidence as any mathematical proposition whatever; and in the following passage we find it laid down, what kind are comprehended under the designation of *benevolent*, as used in the above quotation. "That the motion of a point does not more certainly produce a line, or the addition of numbers a sum, than that benevolence produces a good effect (to the person to whom we wish well,) proportioned to the power and affection of the agent, in the given circumstances. It is also certain, that *keeping faith, gratitude, natu-*

ral affection, &c. are either *parts* or *modes* of a most effectual benevolence towards all, accommodated to particular circumstances; and that they must certainly produce their good effect, after the same manner as it is certain that addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, are parts or modes of calculation; and that a right line, circle, parabola, and other curves, do express the various effects which geometry produces by the motion of a point."

The principal point aimed at by the Bishop, in this chapter, is to establish the position, that we come by our knowledge of what is good, useful, pleasant, bad, and mischievous, both in ourselves and in society at large, by the same kind of means as we arrive at the abstract knowledge of the properties of matter and motion, and the various salutary and pernicious properties of the vast number of objects which fill the universe we inhabit. Certain actions of a moral kind are invariably connected with either good or bad consequences to individuals, or general communities, or both; and we acquire this knowledge from experience. We also find that many material objects have alike bad or good effects upon our bodily and mental frames; and we do, in the same manner, acquire this information from experience. Thus, moral philosophy

is precisely the same in the certainty of its results, and in the method for its successful cultivation, as all other departments of knowledge; namely, by a close and accurate observation of the constitution of things.

The second chapter is entitled, "*Of human nature and right reason.*" Here the author enters, at considerable length, into man's mental, physical, and moral nature. In his bodily constitution, he considers *sensation* holds a prominent station; and that it is from external objects acting upon our senses or organs of perception, that we form to ourselves all those simple ideas or notions respecting external nature. The mind he divides into the *understanding* and the *will;* the former faculty comprehending *apprehension, comparing, judging, reasoning,* a *methodical disposition,* and the power of *recollecting* all these things; and to the will he refers choosing and refusing, as well as the passions. Man's moral nature clearly evinces that he is a being fitted for society; and Bishop Cumberland has established this proposition upon the surest foundation. He clearly shows there are two principles of universal influence amongst the species, which must determine them to practise, in some degree at least, the duties of social life; a circumstance which is

sufficient to repel the assertions of some philosophers, who maintain that man is a being who is, in a state of nature, entirely antisocial. These two principles, which compel him to confederate with his brethren, are, the rights of property, whether in things or in labour; and the second is, the principle of care and benevolence which parents feel towards their children. By the operation of these two elementary or general laws of our moral natures, our author clearly shows, that societies of men, greater or fewer in number, must of necessity be formed; and however writers may dispute about the *actual* formation of states or commonwealths, yet the fact is placed beyond all controversy, that they must have arisen from the confederating influence of private families, and the constitutional and universally diffused notions of private property.

The meaning which Bishop Cumberland attaches to the words, *human nature and right reason*, may be found in the following passage. "I think I sufficiently prove my point, when I have made it appear, that human nature suggests certain rules of life in the same manner that it suggests the skill of numbering. All men, when come to maturity, except they labour under some distemper of mind, *of their own accord*, reckon things by *numbers*,

adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing them, if the numbers be small, without any rules of art. The sentiments of all nations are necessarily the same concerning the sum of two numbers found by addition, and concerning their difference by subtraction, how much soever they may differ in the names and characters by which they express the numbers, which every nation fixes for itself arbitrarily. It seems to me that all, in the same manner, under the same conduct of nature, *necessarily* acknowledge, (1.) That the good of all rational beings is greater than the like good of any part of that aggregate body; that is, that it is truly the greatest good. (2.) That in promoting the good of this aggregate good, the good of individuals is contained and promoted. (3.) That the good of every particular part requires the introducing and settling of distinct property in such things, and such services of rational agents, as contribute to the common happiness; that is, such as are necessary to testify the honour we pay to God, or to preserve the life, health and faculties of every particular man. In these three propositions, we shall find the seeds and force of all the laws of nature to be contained. Skill in numbering is much assisted by *industry*, by artificial characters, and by their places; but

those very helps we owe to nature, as to their original; nor can they ever cause that, which without art we know to be true, and of necessary use in life, to become false or useless. Whatever assistance we may procure from art, the whole effect is to be ascribed rather to nature than to art. Just as, after the art of cookery has fitted meat for nourishment, no one will deny, that we are nourished by the power of nature, otherwise life itself were not natural."

There are, also, in this chapter on "human nature, and right reason," many curious and ingenious remarks and speculations respecting the connexions which subsist between the passions and desires of the mind, and our various bodily organs and functions. Cumberland seems to think that all animals are propelled to seek their own good and safety, by virtue of certain physical principles of action in their respective animal structures; and by this means the welfare and existence of the different species of animated nature are most effectually and permanently secured. And reasoning from the lower animals to men, from analogy and actual observation, he thinks that there is a certain provision made for the regulation of our passions and affections, by a close and powerful sympathy subsisting

between those desires and affections, and certain parts of our animal economy; and that this sympathy powerfully directs our affections into that channel most directly and effectually contributing to the welfare and happiness of social and moral beings. Man is considered as possessing physical organs peculiarly adapted to this end. These organs, the *plexus nervosus*, the connexion existing between the pericardium and the *diaphragm*, and a similar communication between *Nervus Diaphragniticus*, and the *plexus nervosus*, which is necessary to the exercise of the *precardia*, furnish incontestible evidence of a widely extended principle of sympathy between our organs of sense and the powers of our minds. As the strongest passions of human nature are excited by those objects which are more immediately connected with the adoption or enforcing of the provisions of these laws, whether natural or civil, which are necessary for our existence, and the security of our rights of personal property; therefore it is considered "that all those things in a human body which naturally serve to *excite* or *allay* the passions, have a considerable share in settling and defending a distinction of property, in which the whole matter of the laws of nature consists."

The third chapter of the "*Laws of Nature*" is occupied with the consideration of the question "what is natural good?" Good is defined to be that "which preserves and enlarges or perfects the faculties of any one thing, or several." The principal part of this chapter is taken up with observations on Hobbes' notions of what was good; and to show, in opposition to that philosopher's opinions on this point, that good and evil are not merely arbitrary or fluctuating ideas, but that "things are first judged to be *good*, and that they are afterwards desired, only so far as they seem good: that any thing is, therefore, truly judged good, because its *effect* or force *truly helps nature*: that a private good is that which profits *one*; public, which is of advantage to *many*; not because it is *desired* from *opinion*, whether true or false, or delights for this or that moment of time. The nature of man requires, that reason, examining the nature of things, should, from the evidence thence unalterably arising, first determine and judge what is good, (whether in relation to ourselves or others) before we desire it, or are delighted therewith. And it is the part of brutes only to measure the goodness of things or of actions, by *affection* only, without the guidance of reason. Men of brutish disposition experience in

themselves such a way of acting, and are pleased with being told by Hobbes, that this is *agreeable to nature.* Out of this set of men his followers are increased in number. It is, however, more certain, that a madman suffers a real evil, though he be wonderfully pleased with his own madness; and on the contrary, that a remedy is good for the patient, though he should ever so obstinately refuse it."

The principal topic discussed in this chapter is an inquiry into what are the laws of nature, and the reasons why such laws became obligatory upon us. Our author defines the law of nature to be "A proposition, proposed to the observation of, or impressed upon, the mind, with sufficient clearness, by the nature of things, *from the will of the first cause,* which points out that possible action of a rational agent, which will chiefly promote the common good, and by which only the entire happiness of particular persons can be obtained. The former part of this definition contains the *precept,* the latter the *sanction;* and the mind receives the impression of both, from the *nature of things.* Those rewards and punishments are sufficient, which are so great and so certain as to make it evidently conduce to the entire happiness of particular persons, (which the nature of things both

compels them to desire, and makes possible for them to maintain). And whereas privations are best understood by means of their possibilities, actions and omissions contrary to this end, and the mischiefs connected with them, seem by this method to be both discovered and prohibited. For right (or strait) shews what is crooked, as well as what is strait. That which takes the shortest way from the given term, or state of things, to this end, is called *right*, by a metaphor taken from the definition of a *right line*, in use amongst mathematicians. An action, attaining the most desirable effect in the quickest manner, takes the shortest way to this end. Therefore it is right. And that very comparison, by which such action is discovered, supposes all things so considered, that it is known, both what will less conduce to the end, and (with much greater ease) what would obstruct the effecting it."

After the appearance of Mr. Hobbes' publications, moral distinctions seemed, in the eyes of many, to be so vaguely defined, and insecurely founded, in the speculations of this philosopher, that all those moral writers and theologians, who a few years after publicity was given to his thoughts, conceived it their duty to counteract the supposed

dangerous tendency of his views, fell naturally enough into the opposite error, and advanced doctrines about the nature of morality, which, though not so liable to be turned into a corrupt and vicious channel as the principles of their antagonists, were nevertheless equally removed from plain reason, and logical deduction. These opponents of Hobbes imputed to him a desire to level all moral distinctions, and to promulgate the doctrine that all our moral conceptions and principles arose from civil institutions and worldly contrivance. It was the aim, therefore, of several of the most distinguished moral writers who flourished at the commencement of the last century, to take higher ground, and to endeavour to show that our notions or ideas of moral qualities were by no means so variable and uncertain as Hobbes had represented them to be, but were the true architypes of objects and relations which were absolutely eternal and unchangeable in their nature and essence. Hence we find in Wollaston the doctrine that virtue consists in thoughts, words, and actions which are in strict conformity to the nature of things; and his cotemporary, Dr. Clarke, maintains a similar doctrine, that virtue is the conformity of our actions

with the eternal fitness or truth of things. But amongst the many commentators on Hobbes' moral and political philosophy, the most conspicuous and able, in my humble opinion, is Bishop Cumberland; and in the book which is now under consideration, though embracing a somewhat different moral theory from that of Wollaston's and Clarke's, he has ably and zealously endeavoured to establish the permanency and stability of moral distinctions; and has also pointed out in many instances, the self-contradictory opinions of his subtile and somewhat paradoxical antagonist. But the stability of Bishop Cumberland's virtue is not of that refined and absolute description which has been advocated by other writers; he seems, as far as I have been able to judge, from the general scope of his remarks, to be wishful to steer a kind of middle course. He certainly makes frequent use of the word *eternal* in reference to the nature of moral truth; but he uses it in a modified sense. He maintains that virtue is eternal and unchangeable in the same sense as the material universe, and the various relations which its parts have to each other may be said to be eternal. Not that virtue is a thing of such an eternal and absolutely unchangeable a nature, that it must have been coeval with the existence of the

Deity himself, and that it is impossible that it ever could or can receive any modification from his power and wisdom.

I am fully aware that what I have here advanced respecting the opinions of the bishop on the important point, the eternal nature of all moral distinctions, may be liable to controversy; particularly when I am bound to admit that he has, in many parts of his essay, made use of very strong and pointed language, which would seem to bear an interpretation favourable to the very opposite of my own opinions. He says, in page 35, "In like manner, love towards God, and all men, although most freely exerted, after it is exerted, necessarily makes any person as happy as his power can make him, as I have at large explained. Nor is it less manifest, that a consent to the division of property in things themselves, and in human labour, or to preserve the division when made, by innocence, fidelity, gratitude, a limited care of ourselves and our offspring, and humanity exercised towards all, are parts of that universal love, and, therefore, proportionally conducive to the happiness, as of the whole, so of individuals, especially his in whom they are found; than that quadrants, or other lesser arches or sectors, are parts of a cir-

cle. Therefore the *eternity* is *equal*, as well of propositions of the one kind, as of the other." But he afterwards qualifies this passage by the following remarks, which, if their full purport be carefully attended to, will convince every reader, that he ought to be placed in a somewhat different station in the class of moral writers from those who maintain the absolutely eternal and fixed nature of good and evil. "It is, however, certain, that *every human action* and effects, and, consequently, *arithmetical* and *geometrical* operations, with all their effects, depend upon the *will* of the *first cause*. Our whole inquiry is concerning the existence of the laws of nature, and of their obligation, which must entirely be deduced from the *will of the first cause*; I mean that act of *his will*, (and that only, as will appear from what follows,) *by which the powers, actions, and natures of rational beings exist.*" "I have penned the law of nature sufficiently *immutable*, when I have shewn that it cannot be changed without contradiction, *whilst the nature of things and their actual powers, which depend upon the Divine will, remain unchanged.*"

It may also be worthy of a remark in passing, that if any thing were wanting to prove that Bishop

Cumberland did not fall into the views of those who maintained the eternal nature of moral distinctions, in that absolute sense in which some moral writers view that doctrine, it may be found in this consideration, that his very able and acute translator and commentator, Mr. Maxwell, considered that the bishop had laboured under an error, in not embracing the position that the law of nature was eternal, and did not owe its obligation solely to the *will of God.* The whole of Mr. Maxwell's remarks, which are prefixed to the English edition of the essay on the "Laws of Nature," are principally written with a view of supplying, in in some degree, this supposed discrepancy in this work.

CHAPTER VII.

ESSAY ON THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

MR. JOHN LOCKE.

JOHN LOCKE was born in the year 1632, at Wrington, near Bristol, was educated at Westminster till 1651, and afterwards removed to Oxford. Here he studied the various systems of philosophy then in repute; and also applied himself to medicine, which he never practised. He took his degree of master of arts in 1658. He accompanied Sir William Swan as private secretary to the court of Brandenburgh; and, on his return to England, he was introduced to the earl of Shaftsbury, who obtained for him several valuable civil appointments. He repaired to Holland with this nobleman, where he wrote a good part of his celebrated work on the human understanding; which was published in 1690. Being much afflicted with asthma, he retired to Cotes in Essex, where he died in 1704, in the seventy-third year of his age. He was the

author of Discourses on Government; Letters on Toleration; and Commentaries on some of the Epistles of St. Paul, all of which are valuable works.

Though Mr. Locke is not commonly classed among our theoretic moralists, yet his writings have exercised no small degree of influence upon the speculations of those who have treated of the various principles of moral science since his day. Independent of the formal notice of the nature and rules of moral obligation found in his celebrated work on *the Human Understanding*, his well known and generally adopted metaphysical theory is so closely interwoven with every view of our moral nature which has yet been taken, that a distinct notice of the above work is required to furnish the moral student with the connecting links in the progress of that department of knowledge he is engaged in studying.

Several writers of eminence have maintained that Mr. Locke's views of the nature of morality were liable to objection, as sceptical conclusions were fairly deducible from some of the leading principles he advanced. The correctness of this

opinion depends entirely upon the peculiar view we take of his mental theory, and of the various interpretations which is given to his language in some parts of his writings. To arrive, therefore, at a right conclusion on this point, it will be necessary we should make a few remarks upon one or two principal points connected with his system. But before entering upon this part of our proposed plan, we will make a quotation or two from the work on *the Human Understanding*, to show, in Mr. Locke's own words, his views of the nature of moral obligation; and these quotations will both serve to guide the reader to form his own judgment on the point at issue, and also to appreciate the remarks which will be made on the general system of Mr. Locke.

In treating of innate ideas, he maintains that no moral principles are innate or intuitive; like some propositions in mathematics. He says, "I think it will be hard to instance any one moral rule, which can pretend to so general and ready an assent, as, *what is, is*, or to be so manifest a truth as this, *that it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be.* Whereby it is evident, that they are further removed from a title to be innate; and the doubt of their being native impressions on

the mind, is stronger against these moral principles than the other. Not that it brings their truth at all in question; they are equally true, though not equally evident. Those speculative maxims carry their own evidence with them. But moral principles require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth. They lie not open as natural characters engraven on the mind, which if any such were, they must needs be visible by themselves, and by their own light, certain and known to every body. But this is no derogation to their truth and certainty, no more than it is to the truth or certainty of the three angles of a triangle being equal to two right ones: because it is not so evident as, *the whole is bigger than a part*, nor so apt to be assented to at first hearing."

Mr. Locke affirms that moral good and evil is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, by reason of which good or evil is drawn on us by the will or power of the law-maker. "Of these rules or laws to which men generally refer, and by which they judge of the rectitude or purity of their actions, there seem

Essay, vol. i. p. 27.

to me to be *three sorts*, with their three different enforcements, or rewards or punishments. For since it would be utterly in vain to suppose a rule set to the free actions of men, without annexing to it some enforcement of good and evil to determine his will, we must, wherever we suppose a law, suppose also some reward or punishment annexed to that law. It would be in vain for one intelligent being to set a rule to the actions of another; if he had it not in his power to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from, his rule, by some good and evil that is not the natural product and consequence of the action itself; for that being a natural convenience or inconvenience, would operate of itself without a law. This, if I mistake not, is the true nature of all *law*, properly so called."

Without any further quotations on the subject of morals, we shall take a brief survey of Locke's system of the mind, and of the controversy on *the ideal philosophy* which has sprung out of it; not with a direct view of furnishing a dissertation on metaphysics, but because these topics, on which we purpose making a few remarks, have been of late

Essay, vol. ii. p. 72.

years so intimately mixed up with moral systems, and have formed such an important element in academical lectures on moral science, that a work of this kind might be considered defective, did it not contain some notice of a controversy which was carried on for nearly a quarter of a century with great keenness and ability, and which has exercised no inconsiderable influence over several moral systems, which will subsequently come more immediately under review.

We will confine our remarks to two points; first, state the leading principles of Locke's philosophy; and, secondly, make a few observations on the controversy respecting the merits of what has generally of late years gone under the denomination of the *ideal system*.

The principle of Locke's theory is, that all our knowledge is derived from two sources, namely, from the exercise of our bodily senses, and from the mind reflecting, as it were, upon its own powers, or upon the simple ideas or sensations which our respective senses furnish. The exercise of our bodily organs, tasting, hearing, smelling, seeing, and feeling, furnishes us with certain intimations respecting the external qualities of things

around us; but such notions as we have of number, thought, space, identity, &c. are, according to his views, derived from what he terms *reflection.*

This doctrine has undergone a severe scrutiny since its first promulgation. Some philosophers have maintained it in all its parts, and others with considerable modifications. I will here insert a passage from the writings of the late Professor Stewart, which, in my conception, embodies in a short space the principles of all which has been urged against this part of Mr. Locke's system. "That there are many of our most familiar notions *(altogether unsusceptible of analysis)* which relate to things bearing no resemblance either to any of the sensible qualities of matter,* or to any mental operation which is the direct object of consciousness; which notions, (although the senses may furnish the *first occasions* on which they occur to the understanding) can neither be referred to sensation nor to reflection as their *fountain or sources,* in the acceptation in which these words are employed by Locke."

* Stewart's Philosophical Essays, page 103.

It will be necessary to make a few remarks upon this passage, but in doing this we will be as brief as possible.

1st. That some of our notions cannot be analyzed, is no good argument against the doctrine that sensation and reflection are the *fountains and sources* from which they are said to flow; for none of our simple ideas or notions, which are acknowledged on all hands to come from these sources, are, strictly speaking, susceptible of analysis.

2d. What these notions or objects of thought are that relate to things having no resemblance either to the qualities of matter or mind, I am at a loss to conceive; I always understood it to be a universally admitted principle, that all our notions related either to the objects of the material world, or to what passes in our own mind. But it would appear from what Mr. Stewart says, that we can have notions which relate to neither the one nor the other, and yet these notions be the most familiar of any we possess.

3d. I am very much of opinion, that in saying that the senses furnish the *first occasions* of these familiar notions, which relate to things bearing no resemblance to the qualities of either mind or matter, is nothing short, in other terms, of saying

that the senses are the *causes* of these ideas; or notions being produced in our minds. To urge that there is a difference between a thing being the *occasion* of another, and of being its *cause*, is, I conceive, an attempt to draw a line of distinction where there is none in reality. All that we know of cause and effect is, that one event succeeds another; we give the name of *cause* to the antecedent, and the name of *effect* to the consequent. Now in the case before us, the exercise of the senses is acknowledged to be antecedent to the possession of these notions, or at least to the mind's perception of them; consequently, we are authorized to say, by the common rules of reasoning respecting cause and effect, and which rules are sanctioned and enforced by Mr. Stewart himself, that the exercise of the senses is the *cause* of these notions being produced in our minds.

4th. These notions, which Mr. Stewart says, relate to things bearing no resemblance to the qualities of matter, or to any of the operations of the mind, are those of *personal identity*, *existence*, and some others. These notions, he argues in various parts of his writings, are generated by a *process of reasoning*, or spring out of the *natural resources* of the understanding. But this appears to be no

improvement on Locke's doctrine, for it does not make it any clearer to our understandings, how we obtain these notions, by merely telling us they are generated by a process of reasoning; and Mr. Locke says they are formed by reflecting on our simple perceptions. Granting, for the sake of argument, that we cannot see how this comes to pass; is there any more light thrown on this mysterious matter, by saying, these notions are generated by a process of reasoning, or flow from the natural resources of the understanding? What processes of reasonings, or what mental resources are they, from which these notions or ideas flow?

5th. I can see no impropriety or ambiguity in saying that these ideas or notions of personal identity, existence, &c. are produced by sensation. We say we perceive colours by the eye, and sounds by the ear, and thus we maintain that ideas of colours and sounds are produced in the mind through the medium of the eye and the ear. But what evidence can we give that the ideas of colours and sounds may not be produced through the channel of the senses of tasting and smelling? None but this, that we have found people possessed of the faculties of tasting and smelling, and been destitute of seeing and hearing, and yet have had no ideas of colours

or sounds. In like manner, the only evidence we have, or ever can obtain, that sensation is the source of our notions of personal identity, existence, &c. is, that sensation is always antecedent to the perception of these ideas, in the same manner that the exercise of the senses of seeing and hearing is antecedent to our ideas of colours and sounds.

6th. I think the whole of what Professor Stewart has said to show that some of our ideas cannot arise immediately from sensation, may be summed up in a few words. "I maintain," says he, "that our sensations and most familiar perceptions have no resemblance to external things, but, nevertheless, may be traced to sensation as their source; and with respect to our simple ideas of personal identity, existence, and a few others of a similar nature, I cannot find they bear any resemblance to external objects or to any thing in the mind itself; *therefore*, I maintain that these ideas cannot be attributed to sensation as their proper source. Whether this be a consistent or philosophical conclusion, I shall leave others to determine."

Without dwelling at farther length on this part of Mr. Locke's system, we will just turn our attention for a little to the particular construction which has been put upon some part of his writings; or, to

speak more plainly, to the controversy which is known by the name of the *Ideal System.* And certainly this dispute appears to be one of the most curious in the history of philosophy; inasmuch as it points out to us how gratuitous assumptions, partial interpretations, and fanciful distinctions, take hold of men's minds, and insensibly lead them to imagine they are unfolding the true principles of wisdom, while they are only amusing themselves and their readers with ingenious but unsubstantial reveries.

There is perhaps no word in the English language of such common use, both with the learned and the unlearned, as the word *idea.* It was brought into general use in England by Mr. Locke, in his work "*On the Human Understanding.*" And if we are to believe his antagonists, it is upon the particular meaning attached to this word that his whole system rests.

It is not my intention to enter here into any detail of the nature of the discussions which have taken place, at various times, on the meaning of this word as employed by Locke; but to offer a few reasons to show, that many of these discussions, arising at first from the supposed bad tendency of the system of this eminent philosopher, were unne-

cessary; and that the meaning which he attached to the word *idea*, was not that which Dr. Reid, Mr. Stewart, and others, attribute to it, but that which is attached to this word by these very writers themselves.

But before I give my reasons for this opinion, it will be necessary I should state what interpretation Dr. Reid and others, have put upon this word, as employed by Locke and his adherents. I shall make three quotations, in order that I may, as much as possible, avoid the charge of misinterpretation.

"It is a fundamental principle of the ideal system, (meaning Locke's) that every object of thought must be an impression or an idea, that is, a faint *copy* of some preceding impression."* "Ideas, according to Mr. Locke, are nothing but the immediate objects of the mind in thinking. Modern philosophers, as well as the Peripatetics of old, have conceded, that external objects cannot be the immediate objects of our thought; and there must be some *image* of them in the mind itself, in which, as in a mirror, they are seen. And the name *idea*, in the philosophical sense of it, is given to these internal and immediate objects of our thoughts."†

* Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind, page 53.

† Reid's Essays on the Intellectual Powers, page 22.

"For my own part, I can see no good reason for supposing that Locke did *not* believe that our ideas of primary qualities are really resemblances or copies of these qualities, when we know for certain, that, till our own times, this has been the universal doctrine of the schools, from Aristotle downwards."*

I shall next make a quotation from the article *Metaphysics*, in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, where the ingenious writer is speaking about the importance of Reid's metaphysical speculations. "Reid deservedly takes the lead, as having brought about an important reformation in philosophy. He has not only corrected many mistakes of Locke, but he has endeavoured to explode the whole doctrine of ideas which prevailed from the time of Aristotle, till it was attacked by the Scotch philosopher. According to this doctrine, nothing can be present to the mind but one idea, which is supposed to be some kind of representation of the object from which it proceeds. It is not enough that the senses be affected in a particular way; the only result of such affection is the production of an idea, and this idea alone is perceived by the mind. Our readers must

* Stewart's Philosophical Essays, page 89.

recollect, that when the Cartesians speak of *ideas*, they use the word in a sense quite different from its ordinary acceptation in our language. They understand an *idea* as a representation transmitted to the mind through the senses, and which communicates an impression without imparting any portion of its substance. This is the philosophical meaning of the word idea as employed by Locke, and all the Cartesians. In our language it is considered synonymous with *notion* or *conception*."

My reasons for thinking that Mr. Locke did not attach to the word idea the meaning that it stands for image or representation, as is here, in these extracts, asserted, I shall state under two heads.

First, that sufficient attention has not been paid to the definition which Locke himself has given of this word. He says, "it is that term which I think seems but to stand for whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks. I have used it to express whatever is meant by *phantasm*, *notion*, *species*, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking; and I could not avoid frequently using it." Here is a very long and particular definition of the word idea, which might have set aside for ever any disputes about the meaning he attached to it. He asserts it to be synony-

mous with the word *notion*; the very word which, if, say these philosophers from whom I have quoted, he had used as defining what he meant by *idea*, there could have been no objection. And it is well worthy of remark, that though Mr. Stewart has written a good deal upon what he conceives to have been the meaning Locke attached to this word, yet he, in no part of his works, ever takes the slightest notice of that philosopher's definition. But in spite of all that Mr. Stewart has said,—and he has employed a great deal of his usual ingenuity and eloquence upon the subject,—I cannot help being of opinion, that Mr. Locke's definition is to be taken before the conjectures of any philosopher, however eminent he may be.

It is true, that Dr. Reid, in his Essay on the Intellectual Powers, notices this definition of Locke's; but then he does it in such a manner as not to do, in my opinion, complete justice to the latter philosopher's interpretation. In fact, the extract of Reid's is quite a garbled one. He says, "Mr. Locke, who uses the word *idea* so very frequently, tells us, that he means the same thing by it as is commonly meant by *species* or *phantasm*." It is something very curious that in a controversy of this nature—a controversy about

the meaning of a word, and which, in the Doctor's opinion, involved consequences the most momentous—he should have omitted to give a fair statement of his opponent's meaning respecting the word in question. He omits *notion*, and retains those of *species* and *phantasm*. I do not, however, imagine that he missed this word with a view of prejudicing the cause of Locke, and of furthering his own; for I think all who have read Reid's writings must allow that wilful misrepresentation and illiberality form no part of them.

In no part of Mr. Locke's treatise have I perceived that he ever makes use of the words *species* and *phantasm*; a circumstance which makes a strong impression on my mind, that though he made use of these words in his definition of the word idea, yet he thought they might be objectionable, considering their philosophical origin, and the probability there was that they might be construed, from their etymology, to mean that which he was extremely wishful they should not mean. The word *notion* he uses very frequently in his book, and the synonymous words *thought*, *apprehension*, and *conception*. Granting the frequent use he makes of these words bears no proportion to the use he makes of the word *idea*, yet I really cannot

think that when he employed the words thought, apprehension, conception, notion, and the like, he conceived them to stand for images or representations of external things.

It will appear that Mr. Locke has taken every pains, in his definition of the word idea, to prevent all kind of doubt and misinterpretation respecting it, and to show he did not intend it to stand for *image*. It will be observed, he says he meant, by the word idea, *notion*, which could not, from its etymology, be construed to mean image; or, as he says, *whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking*. Now, I should like to learn from these philosophers, who think they have accomplished such mighty things by substituting, in modern metaphysical phraseology, the words *thought, notion, apprehension, conception*, whether, if they were called upon to give a definition of these words, they would give a one more to the purpose, or less subject to cavil, than what Mr. Locke has given of the word in question, namely, "*whatever it is which the mind can be employed about when thinking?*"

I shall observe, in the second place, that the opinion that Mr. Locke meant *idea* to stand for *image* or *representation*, is totally irreconcilable

with the fundamental principles of his system. It was an opinion with him, which he has endeavoured to illustrate in his work, that all our ideas or notions of things are conveyed to the mind, either by the external senses, or spring out of, or are produced by, the exercise of the various powers of the mind. He decidedly maintains, (with what truth is quite a different question), that there are various notions, such as existence, unity, succession, &c. which are produced only by reflection, and do not come into the mind by any of the senses. He could not therefore think that our ideas of existence, unity, succession, number, were images of things, since they did not come into the mind (to employ his own language) in the way in which images can alone be supposed to be produced. To suppose that when he used the word idea to express our reflective notions, he meant the word to convey a totally different meaning from that which he wished it to convey when he treated of those ideas which he maintained were conveyed to the mind by the senses, would be to give him credit for a larger portion of folly and inconsistency than has fallen to the lot of any philosopher of modern days. But he was undoubtedly the wisest and most acute of mankind, and by far

the best metaphysician this country has ever produced; and I cannot think he would have fallen into this gross and palpable error if he had, in any case, ever employed the word idea in the sense commonly ascribed to him. There is no man who ever studied the human mind that paid more attention to language than he did, or was more unlikely to be led away by the use of figures and metaphors. He drew all his knowledge of human nature from a long and patient examination of the operations of his own mind, and he never twists or mistakes facts to serve the purpose of establishing even his own particular system. On the contrary, he always endeavours to give the most literal interpretation of the intellectual appearances of which he treats, and in the most simple language, never leading the judgment of his readers astray by brilliant imagery or rhetorical flourishes. Even these two great faults of his work—the tediousness and verboseness of his language—arose entirely from an anxiety, pardonable in all writers, but more particularly in one who treats of such abstruse matters, to make that plain and intelligible to others which appeared so clear to himself.

It may be worthy of remark, that he maintains that our ideas of the primary qualities of bodies are

resemblances of these qualities, and that our ideas of secondary qualities are not. By our ideas of primary qualities being resemblances, I think he is desirous to prove that our notions of the primary qualities are always the same in all individuals, and in all states of the mind. "We may understand," says he, "how it is possible that the same water may, at the same time, produce the sensation of heat in the one hand, and cold in the other, which yet figure never does." Upon the justness of this opinion which I have ascribed to Locke, I will not at present insist; but his writings on this subject clearly go to prove, that if he did consider our ideas of primary qualities to be resemblances of these qualities, he did not consider the secondary ones in this light, for he himself says they are not resemblances. But Dr. Reid maintains that he did consider secondary qualities, such as heat, coolness, sweet, bitter, &c., to be real copies of external things. The Doctor says, "As to objects of sight, I understand what is meant by an image of their figure in the brain; but how shall we conceive an image of their colour where there is total darkness? And as to all other objects of sense, except figure and colour, I am unable to conceive what is meant by an image of them. Let any man say

what he means by an image of heat and cold, an image of hardness and softness, an image of sound, or smell, or taste. The word image, when applied to these objects, has absolutely no meaning." This is a very strange misapprehension of the doctrines of Locke and his disciples. In what part of any of their writings do they say that we have images of tastes, of smell, of sound, of heat, and of softness? One would almost be led to believe that the Doctor had never read any of the works of the philosophers, of what he calls the ideal system. This quotation constrains us to acquiesce in the opinion of Dr. Priestley, expressed twenty-five years ago, respecting the value of Dr. Reid's writings about ideas; namely, that he was not combating an opinion of Locke's, but a chimera of his own understanding.*

There are, undoubtedly, a few detached passages in his work, which, if literally applied, may give some countenance to the opinion that he meant idea to stand for image; but still these few passages ought not to be put in opposition to the whole scope and tenor of his Essay. I can conceive it possible, (and it is scarcely within the range of

* See Priestley's Examination of Reid, Beattie, and Oswald.

possibility,) that he might think our ideas of extension, solidity, heat, colour, and other primary and secondary qualities of matter, to be images of these qualities; but how am I to think he meant the same by *idea*, when he treats of the existence and attributes of the Deity, the passions and propensities of men, and the various duties enjoined on us by religion and morality? I cannot conceive he should employ the word idea on these subjects, but in the same sense that we now employ the words notion, thought, and conception. If this be the case, we may safely conclude that he would not have attached a meaning so widely different, without such a difference of meaning being intimated to his readers.

But let us hear what he has further to say himself about the nature of *ideas*. He seems, from the passage I am going to transcribe, to have almost anticipated these misapprehensions of his opinions, which have been so long current in the world. "To discover the nature," says he, "of our *ideas* the better, and to discourse of them intelligibly, it will be convenient to distinguish them, as they are *ideas* or perceptions in our minds, and as they are modifications of matter in bodies that cause such perceptions in us, that so we MAY NOT THINK, (*as*

perhaps usually is done,) THAT THEY ARE EXACTLY THE IMAGES AND RESEMBLANCES OF SOMETHING INHERENT IN THE SUBJECT; most of those of sensation being in the mind no more the likeness of something existing without us, than the names that stand for them are the likeness of our *ideas*, which yet, upon hearing, they are apt to excite in us."*

Book ii. chap. viii. sect. 7.

CHAPTER VIII.

ORIGIN OF EVIL.

ARCHBISHOP KING.

WILLIAM KING was descended from a Scotch family, and was born at Antrim in 1650; and having finished the early part of his education, he was removed in 1667 to Trinity College, Dublin, to pursue his academical studies. Having received priest's orders, in 1674, from the Archbishop of Tuam, he was collated by his patron to a prebend in his own church; and when the Archbishop was advanced to the see of Dublin, Mr. King was preferred to the Chancellorship of St. Patrick, and to other valuable benefices. His learning and abilities qualified him to become a powerful champion in defence of the protestant religion, by the publication of three tracts. While he was engaged in this controversy, he was elected dean of St. Patrick;

and when the revolution was effected in England in 1688, the dean became a strenuous agent in promoting it in Ireland. When the authority of King William was fully established, the zeal and activity of Dr. King in favour of the revolution were rewarded with the episcopal dignity, when he was consecrated to the see of Derry. For some years the learned bishop was actively employed in political writings; and in an attempt to convert the presbyterians of his diocese to the episcopal discipline, he was involved in a keen controversy with the dissenters.

In the year 1702, Dr. King was advanced to the archbishopric of Dublin; and about the same time he presented to the world his Treatise on the Origin of Evil, the most elaborate of his works, by which his name has been transmitted to posterity. Some of the doctrines of this treatise were warmly controverted by different continental writers, and particularly by Bayle and Leibnitz. His work was translated from the Latin into English by Dr. Low, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle; and to the same author were communicated the Archbishop's manuscripts after his death, from which the additions and improvements, with answers to objections, were extracted and published in a second edition. Dr.

King was also the author of several single sermons, preached on public occasions. He died in 1729.

Amongst the various speculative systems on the nature of moral obligation, that of Archbishop King's is entitled to hold a high and conspicuous station. It possesses a distinctness, an individuality of character, which does not belong to many other theories, which have been more generally read, and more minutely and keenly criticised. The archbishop's essay embraces a wide range of philosophical investigation, and involves the discussion of some of the most interesting and important questions which can be submitted to the consideration of the speculative moralist or theologian.

There is, perhaps, no question of a purely abstract nature which has engaged so many great minds in eager disputation than the origin of evil. This question takes an early hold of almost every one, how little soever he is inclined to speculation. It forms an important ingredient in the early and incipient stimulants to intellectual curiosity; and the wise and the foolish, the pious and the profane, the exalted in rank, and the lowly in station, the happy and the miserable, are all by

turns, and in their respective situations and characters, eagerly prompted to endeavour to lift up the veil which shrouds the operations of nature and the dispensations of God from the prying curiosity of us his finite and dependant creatures. As no rank, nor age, nor sex, are exempted from troubles, and sorrows, and difficulties of some description or another, every individual, therefore, feels himself excited to contemplation on the *causes* of his uneasiness, fears, and apprehensions, and casts an inquiring eye towards obtaining a more accurate knowledge of those general operations of nature, and dispensations of Providence, which seem, in his conception, to exercise such an unbounded and irresponsible influence over his well-being and happiness.

The inquiry into the cause and origin of evil, prompted as it is by a powerful principle in our nature, must always appear to be of the greatest moment, as it is inseparably connected with some of the most important subjects and leading departments of natural religion. The inquiry involves speculations respecting the existence and attributes of the Deity, and of the nature and constitution of the general order of things which He has created and ordained. Nor are the benefits to be derived

from an examination of this question altogether of a speculative or ideal description; on the contrary, this examination is indirectly calculated to operate beneficially, when properly conducted, upon our practical principles and every-day conduct in life. Although a conclusive and satisfactory solution of this question,—the origin of evil,—be evidently beyond our finite and limited powers and information, yet it behoves every man to investigate the subject for himself in a candid and becoming frame of spirit, with a view of fixing in his mind some generally correct notions of the nature and will of God, as exhibited to us in the works of creation and providence, and of the duties we owe to him and our fellow-men, from the relation which subsists between Him, as our creator, and those who are possessed of the same common nature with ourselves. Every one carries about with him some notions or other respecting the origin of evil, which very frequently exercise an extensive influence over his moral conduct and behaviour. It must, therefore, be desirable that these notions should be grounded upon extensive and accurate observations, sound principles, and correct views of his duties here and prospects hereafter.

Archbishop King, like almost every writer who

has set out in the same inquiry, to account for the origin of evil, has, in the first place, endeavoured to lessen the quantity of evil there is in the universe; and he has done this in the usual manner, by shewing that things we feel and think to be evils, are, when viewed in conjunction with, or in relation to, other things, harmless or beneficial; and the inference which clearly follows from his remarks upon this part of the argument, and which he wishes the reader to draw, is, that if we could see more of the machinery of the universe, and had a more accurate and extensive knowledge of final causes, the less evil of any kind would we perceive. His facts and arguments on this head are precisely the same as those which have been stated and urged by some subsequent writers of popularity and merit, and which they have expanded into a regular system. But I will not enlarge upon this doctrine here, as the remarks it calls for will afterwards follow when the works of these writers will come under review.

The first four chapters of the Essay on the Origin of Evil, now under consideration, are taken up with endeavouring to demonstrate, 1*st*, The existence of a Deity, and that God must, from the very nature of all our conceptions of Him, be invested with the most perfect and complete freedom of action. Natural evil, the Archbishop maintains, is

necessarily involved in the very act of creation, for all created beings must of necessity be imperfect in their natures, and placed at an infinite distance from the perfections of Him by whom they were called into being. This removal from absolute perfection in created beings, constitutes the necessary principle of evil, natural and moral. 2d, A perfect equality in the capacities and functions of all created beings is impossible even in idea; for such equality would be entirely destructive of all right notions of subordination and wisdom, which we consider as essential attributes of the Deity. 3d, It is perfectly agreeable to the divine wisdom to make creatures of different degrees of perfection, for even mere matter is raised in the scale of existence by being created. Our author illustrates his meaning on this point in the following words: "There are infinite degrees of perfection between a being *absolutely perfect* and *nothing*: Of which, if existence be conceived as the first, every thing will be so many degrees distant from nothing, as there are *perfections* found in it, joined with existence. In this scale, then, God will be the top, and nothing the *bottom*; and how much farther any thing is distant from nothing, it is so much the more perfect, and approaches nearer to God. How much any thing

can resemble God in perfection, or how nearly approach to him, we know not; but we are certain that there is always an infinite distance between them. It must have been determined, therefore, by the will of God, where he would stop, since there is nothing but His own will to bound his power. Now it is to be believed that the present system of the world was the very best that could be, with regard to the mind of God in forming it. It might have been better perhaps in some particulars, but not without some new and probably greater inconveniences, which must have spoiled the beauty, either of the whole or of some chief part.

"From hence it appears also that all beings cannot have equal perfections. For the world must necessarily be composed of various *parts*, and these *parts* of *others*, and so on. But a part must needs come short, both of the *divine perfection* and the perfection of the *whole*. For it is nothing with regard to all the perfections which it has not, whether these be divine or created; and since one part is not another, nor the whole, it is plain that every part wants the perfections not only of the whole, but of other parts also. And that the *whole* is more perfect than a *part*, is evident from hence, that it necessarily includes the multiplied

perfection of every part, and besides the parts, when joined together and connected, acquire a new and peculiar perfection, whereby they answer their proper ends, which they could not do asunder; they defend themselves much better and assist each other."

4th, Our author endeavours to show that those evils which are conceived to result from matter and motion, such as generation and corruption are thought to do, are not to be considered as militating in the smallest degree against divine wisdom and goodness. And, 5th, It is every way consistent with the Almighty's benevolence to create some spirits or thinking substances, which may be dependent upon matter and motion, possessing various organs, sensations, affections, and passions, the exercise of any one or all of which being necessary to the motions of the body or bodies to which these substances may be connected.

Our author has thus endeavoured, in these four chapters of his book, to account for all kinds of natural evil, such as physical imperfection, famine, pestilence, and death, by inducing us to look at them not in their individual natures, but in relation to the constitution of the universe at large. He wishes to prove, and has constantly kept this

proposition before the eye of the reader, "*that not one of the evils or inconveniences of our system could possibly have been prevented without a greater ;*" and he considers this as an ample vindication of the wisdom and perfection of the attributes of the deity.

We come now to examine the second part of the essay on moral evil, and this is by far the most ably handled and important part of the book. He sets out with the general position, that the happiness and perfection of every thing or agent must arise from the proper exercise of those faculties or powers which God has conferred upon it; and the more numerous and perfect the powers and faculties of any thing or agent are, in an exact proportion is its capacity for enjoyment and happiness increased. We may, perhaps, without any violent straining of the Archbishop's doctrine, alter the proposition thus:—That every being is perfect, and has within itself the principle of happiness, in proportion as it is free in its own nature to make elections. The more freedom it has the more perfect it must be. The Almighty is a Being who possesses within himself the most perfect and complete liberty of action, and, therefore, is possessed of the greatest possible degree of wisdom and perfection,

and is pleased with objects only because He chooses them. King's language on this topic is so striking, plain and concise, that I cannot refrain from quoting it here. "It appears undeniably that His will could not be determined to election by any goodness in the creatures. For before the election, which is declared to be the cause of goodness in created beings, nothing could be either good or bad—but when the election is made, that only is evil which obstructs the execution of it, and that good which promotes it. The goodness of things is therefore to be determined by their agreeableness to the *divine will*, and not that by the agreeableness or goodness of things.

"We must not therefore attend to such as declare that God chooses things because they are good, as if goodness, and the greater good which he perceives in objects, could determine his will. If the matter had stood thus, it does not seem possible for the world to have been made at all. For they who acknowledge God to be the author of it, confess also, that he is absolutely and completely happy in himself, and does not stand in need of other things. Now it is inconceivable how external things can be of use to God, who comprehends in himself all things which tend to perfect happi-

ness. He must of necessity therefore be indifferent to all external objects, nor can any reason be assigned, with regard to the things themselves, why he should prefer one thing to another. It is plain that things are made by God with goodness, that is with a certain congruity to his own nature; but that they are far from being made on account of any agreeableness antecedent to the Divine will; that, on the contrary, they are necessarily agreeable and pleasant because they are made by his free choice. For since they are nothing in themselves, they must of necessity have both their existence and their agreeableness from that *will*, from which they solely proceed; and it is impossible but that they should be conformable to the will which effected them. For God, by willing, makes those things pleasing to Him, which were before indifferent."

Our author thinks that this power of making election may not be confined to the Deity himself, but may be communicated to other beings in a certain degree and proportion; and that it has been conferred upon man, who is a being that partakes of the principle of pleasing himself with his own elections, or with the exercise of his own will. He says, "Yet it is to be remarked, that this self-deter-

mining power is not of such a nature as to imply infinite perfection; for it may be consistent with an imperfect understanding, and other appetites, as we have shown before. It is therefore not peculiar to God, or uncommunicable; there is no reason for us to doubt, therefore, whether a creature may partake of it: if God were pleased to communicate it, there seems to be no contradiction in the thing for a creature to be capable of it. Now, that being which has this gift bestowed upon it, will manifestly be more noble than the rest, and a more perfect resemblance to the Deity; since, therefore, God has created the less perfect beings, we may, without any absurdity, believe that he has not omitted the more perfect."

The Archbishop endeavours to establish the following propositions.

1st. That man being such an agent as he describes him to be, a creature who can please himself with his own elections, he may, in consequence, prescribe to himself an end or purpose, and take measures for its successful prosecution; though that end might originally have been quite indifferent to him. For since pleasure and happiness are defined to arise from the bare exercise of certain powers and faculties which God has communicated to us,

every thing which is favourable to the proper and efficient exercise of these powers and faculties must administer pleasure and delight to us.

2d. But since we are beings endowed with limited and distinct appetites, passions, and intellectual powers, and employ these for different ends and purposes in our social state, there must necessarily follow, from the diversity of relations amongst ourselves, as well as amongst other beings and objects in nature, considerable inconvenience and occasional disorder; and these arise from our own and others limited powers and capacities. Hence it follows, that a possibility of evil is a necessary consequence, from the actions and motives of all subordinate and created beings, and cannot possibly be separated from them by any power or wisdom whatever; as imperfection cannot be separated, even in idea, from an act of creation.

3d. As those beings to whom we have alluded, who have the power of volition, and who derive pleasure from the exercise of their various faculties and power of choice, may, nevertheless, employ them improperly, and choose amiss, and thus injure themselves, as well as others, in making elections.

4th. Since there is in this universe such an im-

mense variety of objects and agents that are calculated to be either beneficial or injurious to us, as circumstances may happen, and as we have not the power, from our limited views and imperfect natures to extract, at all times, the salutary from the noxious elements which every way surround us, it appeared to the divine Being wise and proper to frame and promulgate such rules and directions as suited our nature, and which would be calculated to point out to us, in a clear and perspicuous manner, what would tend to our happiness, as well as the happiness and welfare of others.

4th. As a perfect equality in perfection, or in the capacities for action and enjoyment, in created beings is impossible, various orders and degrees must therefore exist amongst intelligent agents; and since some of the lower orders of these intelligent creatures possess advantages in common with those of higher and more elevated stations; and as the number of the latter could not have been greater than we find it to be, subordinate agents ought to feel content and happy with that portion of enjoyment which corresponds with their scale in the order of being. But if any of the higher order of creatures do commit, by a voluntary act of their own, that which is calculated to degrade the rank

which they hold, it would be unjust in the Almighty towards the lower ranks of social beings, not to let these individuals in the higher exercise their own free choice; for there can no blame be attributed to God for allowing a being to suffer from his own wish and desire; especially when we consider the broad principle which regulates the creation of all intellectual beings, namely, that freedom in elections constitutes one of the principal elements of all rational natures. This contrivance is every way worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God; and it also shows that He desires to act towards all his creatures in a fair and equitable manner. Those who occupy a less prominent station in the scale of intelligence ought to feel content, as they are endowed with powers and faculties which, if properly exerted, may raise them to a more lofty station; and those beings who enjoy more exalted ranks, ought to practise humility, lest, by improper use of their faculties, they may fall from that rank. In the one class, the dread of lessening its happiness will always be present; and in the other, the hope of increasing its happiness will always exercise a beneficial influence. This apparent contrariety of views and interests is calculated to maintain the harmony of the moral world in a much more effectual man-

ner than by a fixed necessity or principle of fate. We cannot, therefore, justly call in question the conduct of the Almighty in making this arrangement; for He has given us a certain set of organs and faculties, and the power of making a good or bad use of which is also placed in our hands; and He has also connected a certain portion of happiness with a proper exercise of these endowments, and a certain portion of pain with the improper exercise of them; and this constitution of the universe at once establishes his justice and his wisdom.

5th. If the truth of these premises be acknowledged, it will clearly follow, that what is generally denominated *imperfection*, *misery*, and *sin*, may be found to exist in a world whose Maker is infinitely wise and holy; and that there is no necessity to attribute these to the operation of a *distinct evil principle*.

The Archbishop's view of moral obligation may be comprehended in a few words. The Almighty is a being who is delighted with his own election; that is, what he wills, or chooses, or creates gives him pleasure, just because he has willed, or chosen, or created these things. Man is a being who has been created with a little circle or sphere of liberty

around him, so as to do what seemeth good in his eyes. To his proper elections there is attached pleasure and permanent benefit; to his improper, pain and permanent loss; and it is in consequence of his possessing the power within himself of doing the one and avoiding the other, that he becomes amenable to the laws of moral obligation, and is considered entitled to praise or blame, approbation or censure. It may not be altogether out of place here just to remark, that Archbishop King's Treatise is illustrated with very copious notes by his commentator and translator, Bishop Law. These notes show a most profound and accurate knowledge of all the principal arguments and controversies either directly or remotely connected with the matter contained in the "*Origin of Evil.*"

I will now advert more at large to another principle, which forms a constituent part of the Archbishop's book; namely, that the obligatory nature of all morality must be derived from the *will of God.* As this is an important doctrine, and as there is a great variety of opinions as to its merits, I will make no apology to the reader, other than what may properly be derived from the importance of the controversy, for here inserting a few pages

from a recently published work of my own, in which this subject is treated of at some length.

" The principal arguments against the doctrine that morality is founded upon the will of God, are the following :—

" 1st, This doctrine takes it for granted, that what is now denominated virtue or merit, and vice or demerit, became such purely and solely from an act of the *divine will ;* and if this exercise of the will of the Deity had not taken place, there would not have been any such things as virtue or vice, merit or demerit. If the world had existed either from chance or necessity, and in the state and condition we now see it, then virtue and vice would have possessed, relatively to each other, an indifferent if not a common nature. What was praiseworthy, honest, and conducive to our happiness, would have had then no distinctive character from what was immoral, dishonest, and destructive of our peace. In founding the existence and nature of virtue and vice upon the pure will and pleasure of the Almighty, we stamp both with equal authority, and confound the qualities of each.

" 2d, If the mere act of the will of the Almighty, abstractly considered, made or created that which we call virtue, and rendered it obligatory upon us

because, and only *because*, it was the act of his will, then vice, which is in its nature and effects quite opposite from virtue, being likewise created and called into operation by this self-same act of the will, must be considered as possessing a power of obligation upon us every way equal with virtue itself, and that wickedness and folly became as excellent in their natures and effects as goodness and wisdom, seeing that, if the *will* made virtue, and vice owed its nature and effects to the same will, then they must both be in every respect alike.

" 3d, The principle which maintains that virtue and vice owed their existence and distinctive character to the will of God, presupposes, that, before the exercise of the will, virtue and vice had nothing different in their natures, but were viewed, as it were, by the eye of the Almighty as one and the same, and therefore there would seem to have been no *motive* or inducement in the Almighty to create a difference, or give a preference to virtue more than to vice.

" 4th, The Almighty might, if he had chosen, have ordained that man should rebel against him, and not obey him, should hate and not love him, and might have violated with benefit and pleasure the whole ten commandments.

" 5th, The doctrine now under consideration is inconsistent with the attribute of the Deity, which we call *omniscient.* Every thing which has been created was seen from eternity, or existed, as it were, in the divine mind; for the past, the present, and the future are as one to him. All moral natures, moral relations, and moral consequences, must have been, with other things in the divine mind, prior to their creation; that is, must have existed in the same manner as figurative representations of material or moral objects may exist in our own minds, perfect in all other parts and relations; such, for example, as a landscape, or a moral being endowed with passions, virtues, or vices, such as are commonly described by us in works of fiction.

" 6th, The scheme that morality depends upon the *will* of God, 'not only involves in it that mankind, with all their impiety, injustice, cruelty, oppression, wars, and butcheries, are in their nature equally amiable and excellent as angels, with all their truth and benevolence; but, also, that the character of fiends is in itself, and independently of the fact, that God chose it should be otherwise, just as lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy, as that of angels. If then God had willed the character which Satan adopted and sustains to be moral

excellence, and that which Gabriel sustains to be moral worthlessness, these two beings continuing in every other respect the same, would have interchanged their characters,—Satan would have become entirely lovely, and Gabriel detestable,—must not he who can believe this doctrine, as easily believe, that if God had willed it, two and two would have become five? Is it at all easier to believe that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures, than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?'

"7th, We might inquire, what is the nature of the will of God? Does that will become good, holy and just, merely because that God willed it should be such; or, is that will excellent in its own nature, independently of any exercise of Almighty volition? If we maintain that the will of God is not excellent in its own nature, but became such by an act of his will, then it clearly follows, that 'if God had been a being equally malevolent, and by an act of his will had determined that his character should be infinitely excellent, it would of course have become infinitely excellent, and he himself would have deserved to be loved, praised, and glorified for his infinite malice, cruelty, and oppression, just as he now does for his infinite goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy. According to this

scheme, therefore, there is no original moral difference between the characters of an infinitely malevolent being, and an infinitely benevolent one; because this difference depends on a mere act of will, and not at all on the respective natures of the things themselves. That a malevolent being would have made this determination, there is no more reason to doubt, than that it would be made by a benevolent being; for it cannot be doubted, that a malevolent being would have entirely loved and honoured himself. The question whether God is a benevolent or malevolent being, seems therefore to be nugatory, for all our inquiries concerning the subject, which have any practical importance, terminate in this single question,—What has God chosen?"*

"8th, It is observed by a very learned and ingenious writer, who has devoted a good deal of attention to this subject, but whose language is open to very opposite interpretations, that 'the *law* of *nature* is infinitely superior to all authority of *men* and independent upon it, so its obligation, primarily and originally, is antecedent also even to this consideration of its being the positive will or command of

* See these arguments treated more fully in Dwight's System of Theology, vol. iii. p. 427.

God himself. For as the addition of certain numbers necessarily produces a certain sum, and certain geometrical or mechanical operations give a constant and unalterable solution of certain problems or propositions: so in moral matters there are certain necessary and unalterable respects or relations of things, which have not their original from arbitrary and positive constitution, but are of eternal necessity in their own nature. As in matters of sense, the reason why a thing is visible is not because it is seen, but it is therefore seen because it is visible: so in matters of natural reason and morality, that which is holy and good is not therefore holy and good because it is commanded to be done, but is therefore commanded of God because it is holy and good. The *existence*, indeed, of the *things themselves* whose proportions and relations we consider, depends entirely on the *mere arbitrary will and good pleasure of God*, who can create things when he thinks fit. But when things are created, and so long as it pleases God to continue them in being, their *proportions*, which are *abstractly of eternal necessity*, are also in the things themselves *absolutely unalterable*.'*

* Dr. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 216.

"It would be acting an unfair and disingenuous part, not to allow that these objections possess great force; indeed some of them may be said to be entirely unanswerable. But in making this concession, we need not be prevented from stating some considerations of a directly opposite nature, which, if they are not calculated to produce absolute conviction, will at least induce us to see that this important, but rather abstruse and intricate question, has two different aspects in which it may be viewed.

"1. The whole of the arguments which have just now been stated against the principles of Archbishop King's system, hinge upon this assumption, and it is altogether a futile and gratuitous one:—that we, finite and imperfect creatures, can have an adequate and full conception of the nature and attributes of the Deity, of his creative power, the nature of his moral constitution, and of the final ends or purposes for which he has made the universe, together with us his feeble and dependant creatures.

"2. But waving this objection, which is of great weight, and which must suggest itself to every candid and reverential mind at the very threshold of this inquiry, let us apply our reasoning to the subject, and we will see that logical difficulties, as

numerous, and seemingly insurmountable, will be found in the moral theory,—that the law of morality is *not* obligatory upon us from the consideration of its being the express *will* of God.

"3. In saying that the Deity could have no *motive* to create virtue or vice, or to give a preference to the former or to the latter, is to talk after the manner of men; it is to maintain that God is influenced by something exterior to or independent of himself; for it must always be held in remembrance, that we can attach no idea to the word *motive* but that of foreign influence or force upon the being to whom the motive is directed. If the motive in this instance be held to be part of the divine nature, coeval in its existence with his other attributes, then we may again ask, in what manner, and at what time, did this motive begin to manifest itself? If it existed from all eternity, it must have exercised its power from all eternity also. But an eternal motive is an absurdity. A *motive* or *inducement* is something arising out of the *circumstances of the case.* To say that a motive always existed, seems nothing short of a contradiction; for the word motive invariably means *something arising out of something else;* and to suppose an infinite series of motives is preposterous in the extreme, and, when

pushed to its utmost limits, is alike destructive to the existence of matter and of the Deity himself.

" 4. Besides these considerations, it may be observed; that an eternal, self-created, and infinitely wise and powerful being must, if we can strain our feeble imaginations to grasp at even a faint conception of the matter, be supposed to be acted upon only by a motive as eternal, self-created, and infinitely as powerful as himself.

" 5. If a divine motive, if we may so term it, was indispensably necessary to stamp the law of God with moral validity, then this is as much as to say, that the obligatory nature of this law owed its sole existence not only to this *something*, which we term a motive, which we must conceive to be external to, and independent of, the Deity himself, but of which *something* we do not profess to have the smallest conception, and which we consequently have not been able at any time to designate by any appellation whatever.

" 6. If the law of morality be anterior to or considered as coeval in point of existence with the Deity himself, then this law becomes obligatory upon us. We obey its injunctions, not from any considerations of its being his law, or of his creation, but *solely* on

account of its being anterior to or coeval in point of duration with himself.

"7. To say that the duties and obligations of morality are eternal, and that the Deity is obliged or necessitated to regulate himself by this eternal law, then this is to place this law above himself, and to make him entirely dependant upon it. This supposition is also completely at variance with all our notions, whether philosophical or popular, which we have of law in general; for we cannot maintain that any law can have an existence anterior to or coeval with the lawgiver or framer of the law.

"8. If the distinctions between virtue and vice be of the same nature as the truth or falsehood of mathematical axioms and propositions, and if it be true, as affirmed, that the Almighty could not alter the nature of even the simplest truth in the latter branch of human knowledge; then we are led to infer, that mathematical evidence is completely independent of his power, and incapable of receiving any alteration or modification from his omnipotence.

"9. If we grant that the nature of mathematical evidence could not be affected by the Almighty's power, it is but fair to infer, that all other kinds of truth must also partake of the same nature, that is, be independent of the power and will of God; and

as we find from experience that the laws of matter and motion, by which the whole universe is regulated and upheld, are possessed of the same degree of evidence as that which is ascribed to mathematics; then we must come to the conclusion, that the universe, as at present constituted, could not have been constituted otherwise, and that the principles by which the movements of great masses of matter are regulated, as well as the principles which bind together the smallest particles or atoms, must have existed from all eternity.

"10. As mathematical truths, and indeed all kinds of truths, are perceived by the mind of man, and bear a certain fixed relation to it, it does not, in my humble opinion, appear an unwarrantable stretch of assertion to maintain, that it might have pleased the Almighty, and that it was within his power, to have altered the relative connexion or system of laws which exist between truth in general and our minds. At any rate, those who maintain that the Almighty had it not in his power to alter the nature of mathematical evidence, must also in consistency maintain, that our minds, by which that truth is perceived, and to which it must be considered to bear a certain and fixed relation, could not have been otherwise made than we find them to be. And, more-

over, it may also be remarked, that as there is a certain connexion subsisting between the nature and operations of our minds, and the nature and operations of our bodies, it is but fair to presume, that, if our minds could not have been altered from what they now are, neither could our bodies, without destroying that concord and mutual harmony of action which experience teaches us do at present subsist between them. With whatever difficulties the position may be attended, there are few persons, I apprehend, who would not readily concede that both our minds and bodies might have been very differently constituted from what they are, if it had so pleased the *will* of the Almighty to have done so.

" 11. If all moral truths, and truths relating to other branches of human knowledge, be affirmed to be not independent of the will of the Almighty in the absolute meaning of the phrase, but only from part of his *nature* or *essence*, then this view of the matter is precisely the same as that of Spinoza—being founded upon the same principle, and differing only in forms and modes of expression.

" 12. The arguments which are founded upon an analogy between the way in which the Almighty might be conceived to have seen things, before they were actually created, and imaginary repre-

sentations of material objects of the mind's conception, such as a plan of a house, a landscape, &c., are not perfect and complete, and do not in any conceivable manner seem capable of being applied to the Deity. We obtain our imaginary representations from a knowledge of realities; but in the case of the Deity, as here supposed, the moral and physical truths, and their various relations, are represented as having an existence before any thing material or substantial was created. This consideration, trifling as it may at first sight appear to many, does, in my humble conception, destroy the whole argument on this point.

" 13. It would be easy to push these inquiries to a greater length, but probably at the expense of appearing dry and tedious to the generality of readers. On every side in which this interesting question—*whether our moral and religious obligations centre in the will of God, or they do not?* I think the preponderance of rational evidence is in favour of the position that the *will of God* must be the reason why his commands become invested with an obligatory character. There can no possible harm attend the belief of the complete and absolute free will of the Deity; on the contrary, the opposite hypothesis, that he is not free to act in all things, is

full of danger, and must lead, by fair and legitimate inference, to downright atheism. There is no middle course to steer. We cannot maintain the Almighty to be a necessary Being in some matters, and not in others, without running into absolute absurdity and confusion.

"14. The whole of natural and revealed religion may be considered as consisting of two kinds of precepts or commands: the one moral and the other positive. The former of which we do by natural reason see the fitness and propriety, but the fitness of the latter we do not perceive so clearly, and they become obligatory upon us, solely from being the positive commands of the Deity. Many of the most important doctrines of revelation become objects of faith, and principles of action, not on account of any perceivable fitness or congruity in themselves, but solely because they are ordained from heaven. The doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and a day of final judgment, are matters of importance, and objects of interest, not from their appearing *fit* or *reasonable* in their own natures abstractly considered, but purely because we are told that God has *willed* these things. I think it is a grievous mistake to imagine that there is any

resemblance between the truth of these doctrines, and the truth of mathematics; for in order that we should be able to perceive the fitness or propriety of these doctrines, it would be necessary we should be well and thoroughly acquainted with the whole of the moral government of the Deity. To talk of the fitness or reasonableness of such doctrines, in the same confident and decisive manner as we talk of mathematical relations, it would be necessary we should know just as much as the Deity himself. The only foundation, therefore, for the obligatory nature of his positive commands, of which we can know any thing, is, that they are simply the result of his *will* and *pleasure*.

"15. It may also, I think, be fairly maintained, that even the moral precepts of the Almighty do not stand upon any different ground from his positive commands; nor does there appear to be, at bottom, any arguments for referring the latter to the express *will of God*, which do not equally, and with the same force, apply to the former. Looking, for example, at the nature of the ten commandments, there is nothing in them abstractly considered, when viewed apart from the nature of man, and the constitution of the social state, to which they refer, that can induce us to believe that the con-

nexion which subsists between their performance or non-performance, and happiness and comfort, misery and disorder, is of an eternal and immutable description, and is unsusceptible of any modification from the will or power of the Almighty. We might easily imagine that society might have been so constituted, that, going into our neighbour's house, and taking away his goods, might have been considered quite a harmless action, and not denominated as the heinous crime of theft. *Why* the connexion was at first established, and still exists between virtue and happiness, vice and misery, no other account can be given, than that it has so pleased God to establish and uphold this connexion; and all the arguments which have at various times been brought forward in support of the doctrines of natural religion, and the obligations of morality, are founded, not upon what is conceived by us to be impossible to be constituted otherwise; but upon what we perceive *is* constituted: not upon abstract speculations on the limited powers of the Deity, but solely on the ground that he has chosen to frame an order of things, which both intimates to us, in some measure, his existence and nature, and at the same time shows us that our interest and duty are con-

nected with a due observance of the laws which emanate from this order of the world. The foundation for the truth of moral precepts is the same as that for all our other knowledge, excepting that of mathematics. In every law of nature which comes under our observation, we can suppose some alteration or modification of it; but of the nature of mathematical relations we cannot. This distinction ought always to be duly attended to, whenever we draw any inferences from the nature of mathematical evidence to that of moral or religious subjects. There is no difficulty in supposing that the earth might have been quite flat, or a perfect square, and been quite stationary, instead of its present globular shape, and its annual and diurnal motions; or that man might have been made ten times larger than he is, and instead of two eyes he might have had a score. Can we not conceive that many of the principles of matter and motion might have been different; and the phenomena of capillary attraction might have been observed in a tube of a foot, instead of being limited to that of one-tenth of an inch in diameter? The laws of electric and magnetic action might, for any thing we can perceive to the contrary, have been quite different from what we find them to be; and who

will say that it would have been impossible to have made any alteration in the laws of chemical affinity? Might it not have been so constituted that milk and water might have produced a poisonous compound to man, instead of these things forming a wholesome drink? The same remarks may be applied to moral subjects. *Why* the connexion, which we now find, should subsist between virtue and happiness, and vice and misery, we cannot tell, otherwise than by saying that such is the order or constitution of things. It might have been ordered that drinking spirituous liquors, the excessive indulgence of which produces such lamentable effects, might have been attended with as few pernicious consequences as the drinking of water. It might have been so ordered that a blow upon a man's head, which in his present condition would produce instant death, might have been accompanied with the same effects which we experience from the tickling of a straw. In the case of mathematical relations the matter stands somewhat different. Here we *cannot conceive* how two and two can make five or six; nor how the proportion of a square should be the same as those of a circle. The principle point insisted upon, for the immutability and eternal nature of mathematical relations,

is, that we cannot conceive the contrary of any axiom, *and from this circumstance alone*, the proposition is affirmed, that even the Deity himself could not alter the nature of these relations. But even if this position were granted (which I think a very bold one) it could not justify us in inferring that the relations amongst other things could not have been different from what they are found to be. Here the principal circumstance is wanting which induced us to come to this conclusion in mathematics. With respect to the operations of nature we can easily imagine various alterations and modifications to be effected upon them. The whole constitution of nature; the numerous physical, moral, and intellectual relations which we observe amongst the multitude of things around us, must always, to our limited capacities, when abstractly considered, appear of an arbitrary character; nor does a single tittle of the truth or influence of these laws of nature arise, as in the case of mathematics, from an idea that we cannot perceive how these various relations might have been otherwise constituted with regard to one another or to us.

"16. It appears to me, that the principal cause of the antipathy which has generally been manifested

against the doctrine, that morality is founded upon the *will* of God, has been, that, upon this hypothesis, the Almighty is made the author of sin. But allowing, for the sake of argument, that such a position may be fairly deducible from this theory of Archbishop King's, yet I should like to know, if there ever was, or can be, any moral theory proposed that completely sets at rest this long agitated question—the origin of evil. Whatever speculative opinions we may embrace, we will find this question meeting us in the face at every turn; and though some moral theories do more obviously and directly suggest the question on the origin of evil, to the mind, than others, yet this question is involved in all theories, and seems incapable of a solution from any. It is a question to which we can never hope to make even the slightest progress towards affording a satisfactory answer, and we must be content to leave it, where every inquisitive mind, after years of toil, has been obliged to leave it—just where it was found.

"17. If I am not mistaken, the arguments which are commonly brought forward for the additional obligations which the suggestions of natural morality receive from a direct revelation from heaven, are entirely founded upon the principle, that such a revelation makes known to us more completely

and decidedly *what is the will of the Almighty.* It is allowed on all hands, that certain moral principles are recognised, and certain moral duties performed by all mankind, merely from the light of nature herself; but it is maintained, and, I think, properly enough, that the Scriptures unfold these principles more simply and clearly to our view, and enforce the performance of these duties with a greater weight of moral obligation; and for these reasons the sacred writings are justly considered of paramount importance. But the fact of man's moral duty being revealed from above, can be turned to no profitable purpose by those who adopt the opinion, that virtue is immutable, in the absolute sense of the word, and coeval with the existence of the Deity himself. The reason of this is plain. This immutability, this constitutional fitness of things, which is said to constitute the essence or abstract nature of virtue, *is not made more apparent by a revelation than without one.* We are taught by nature to pay, in some degree at least, a portion of respect to the lives and properties of our fellow-men; and the duties which these moral suggestions make known to us involve certain moral relations which are said to be of an eternal and immutable description, which the Almighty never had, nor never can

have, any power to alter or modify in the smallest degree. Now, granting this for a moment to be correct, may we not be allowed to ask in what degree can this eternal and immutable character, which these virtues here alluded to possess, be rendered more apparent to our perceptions by the Scriptures merely announcing to us that we are not to commit murder, and are not to steal? If I am induced from my natural constitution to feel a certain emotion of pity when distress of any kind is presented to my mind, the eternal fitness or propriety of this feeling is not in the slightest degree made more apparent or different in its nature to us by the mere circumstance, that we are commanded by God to be kind and compassionate to the weak and distressed. The only additional force which such announcements can confer, is merely from a consideration that these commands proceed immediately from the mouth of the author of our being,—that this visible manifestation of his existence and attributes points out more directly and plainly, that such and such duties it is *his will* and pleasure we should perform.

"18. It may also be worthy of remark here; that if moral distinctions were of the same nature as mathematical truths, then no revelation could possibly impart any additional degree of evidence to

them, for they would be as perfect from the mere suggestions of the understanding as they could be from any written or verbal declaration respecting them, of whatever nature that declaration might be. It would not have rendered the truth more forcible, or more readily perceived, or in any degree added to its eternal or immutable nature, if it had formed part of the moral law, that man were to believe that three and three made nine, or that a square is not a circle. The case would stand precisely the same with respect to all moral distinctions, if these distinctions were allowed to be of precisely the same nature as mathematical truths, eternal and immutable, coeval with the Deity himself, and whose nature, it is contended, he can neither curtail, enlarge, or modify, not even in the smallest tittle.

"19. But it may be objected to what is here stated, that the reason why revelation adds so powerfully to the force of natural moral obligation is, that a future life, and rewards and punishments, are thereby made known to us exclusively through this channel; and these form powerful incentives to moral rectitude and true piety. But these rewards and punishments can do nothing more than add a certain portion of strength to these moral motives and inducements which are established by the con-

stitution of nature, and which are acknowledged, on all hands, to be completely independent of revelation. The Scriptures do not alter the nature of that moral evidence which we derive from the exercise of our various faculties, and from our station in the scale of social existence; they only strengthen that evidence where it is feebly given, and direct, modify, and apply it to purposes of a lofty and ennobling character.

"20. The salutary influence, then, which a revealed religion exercises over our moral characters, must arise, not from any change in its effects in moral relations abstractedly considered, but in making those relations more attended to by us, as inducing men to look upon them as being purely and simply the *will of God*, and as becoming invested with additional obligations by reason of his command.

"21. All the arguments in favour of Christianity, drawn from what are termed its external evidences, do merely express thus much,—that such and such things are commanded to be done or to be avoided; and that certain rewards and punishments are attached to these actions, and these commands and arrangements of Providence proceed from the *will and desire of the Most High*. Writers on the ex-

ternal evidences tell us, in substance, that of the fitness or unfitness, the propriety or impropriety of the doctrines and duties found in the Scriptures, we are not at liberty to speak,—nor whether the important object of a revelation might or might not have been accomplished in any other manner than we find it to have been. The question is, can we bring forward a sufficient portion of evidence to show that the Bible is the word of God, and was sent to man to be a rule for his conduct? If this can be answered in the affirmative, then all the objections which may be urged against any particular doctrines or precepts contained therein, upon the ground that we cannot by *our reason* sufficiently comprehend the one, or perceive the utility of the other, must necessarily fall to the ground; and the seemingly objectionable matter must remain as strictly obligatory upon us to believe and practise, as other doctrines and precepts which appear more level to our understandings; and for this sole reason, that we find what is above our reason to be contained in the Scriptures, which are defined to be the *revealed will* of God to *man*."

CHAPTER IX.

RELIGION OF NATURE DELINEATED.

MR. WILLIAM WOLLASTON.

MR. WOLLASTON was descended from an ancient family in the county of Stafford, and was born in the year 1659. In 1674 he became a pensioner in Sidney College, Cambridge, and obtained a small situation near Birmingham. From the death of a relation in 1688, he fortunately became the heir to a considerable landed estate, which relieved him from the embarrassments he had previously experienced, and enabled him to spend the remainder of his life in literary ease and comfort. About the year 1722, he published his Treatise, entitled "*The Religion of Nature Delineated*,"—and so well received was this work, that it is said ten thousand copies were sold in the space of a very few years. From an intimation in the introductory part of the

treatise, he seems to have meditated a work on revealed religion, which, however, never made its appearance. He died in 1724, aged 76 years.

The moral theory of Mr. Wollaston is founded upon nearly the same principle as that of Dr. Clerk's. The Doctor imagines virtue or merit to consist in regulating our conduct agreeably to certain fitnesses of things; and Mr. Wollaston says, for a man to act virtuously, he must square his conduct according to the truth of things; or treat every thing according to *its real character*, or *as it really is*. His thoughts on morals are principally contained in the first section of his treatise,—"*The Religion of Nature Delineated.*" This section, which professes to treat of moral good and evil, is occupied with his illustration of eleven propositions, which contain nearly the whole of what may, with propriety, be termed his speculations on morality; and as the book is somewhat rare, I shall here transcribe these propositions, for the use of those who may not be able readily to procure it.

1st. That act, which may be denominated morally good or evil, must be the act of a being capable

of distinguishing, choosing, and acting for himself; or, more briefly, of an intelligent and free agent.

His opinions on the freedom of the human will, and of the connexion which subsists between human liberty and our conceptions of good and evil, seem to be nearly the same as those promulgated by King and Cumberland. On the freedom of the divine will, his principles and language are precisely the same as those which these two writers bring forward. He says, "If there is a Supreme Being, upon whom the existence of the world depends, and nothing can be in it but what he either causes or permits to be, then to own things *to be as they are* is to own what he causes, or at least permits, *to be thus caused or permitted;* and this is to take things as he gives them, to go into his constitution of the world, and to submit to his will, revealed in the book of nature. To do this, therefore, must be agreeable to his will. And if so, the contrary must be disagreeable to it; and, since (as we shall find in due time) there is a perfect rectitude in his will, certainly *wrong*."*

2d. Those propositions are true which express things as they are; or truth is the conformity of

* Page 14.

those words or signs, by which things are expressed, to the things themselves.

3d. A true proposition may be denied, or things may be denied to be what they are, by deeds as well as by express words or another proposition.

The principal part of Mr. Wollaston's theory rests upon this third proposition, that actions speak a language as clearly, forcibly, and generally understood as words themselves do. A man may deceive another with words; but actions make the art of deception more difficult. "If," says he, "A should enter into a compact with B, by which he *promises* and engages never to do some certain thing, and after this he does that thing, in this case it must be granted that his act *interferes* with his promise, and is *contrary* to it." "In the *Jewish* history we read, that when *Abimelech* saw *Isaac* sporting with *Rebecca*, and taking conjugal liberties, he presently knew her to be Isaac's wife; and if she had not been his wife, the case had been as in the preceding instance. If it be *objected* that she might have been his mistress or a harlot, I *answer*, so she might have been, though *Isaac* had told him by *words* that she was his wife. And it is sufficient for my purpose, and to make acts capable of contradicting truth, if they be allowed *to express*

things as plainly and determinately as words can. Certainly *Abimelech* gave greater credit to that information which passed through his eye than to that which he received by the ear, and to what *Isaac* did than to what he *said*; for *Isaac* had told him that she was not his wife, but his sister." Again: "When a man lives as if he had an estate which he has not, or *was*, in other regards, (all fairly cast up,) what he *is not*, what judgment is to be passed upon him? Does not his whole conduct breathe untruth? May we not say (if the propriety of language permits) that *he lives a lie?*

4th. "No act (whether deed or word) of any being, to whom moral good and evil are imputable, that interferes with any true proposition, or denies any thing to be what it is, can be right."

Our author illustrates this proposition with many acute and just remarks, and concludes with observing, that "designedly to treat things as being what they are not is the greatest *possible* absurdity; it is to put bitter for sweet, darkness for light, crooked for straight, &c.; it is to subvert all science, to renounce all sense of truth, and to study to deny the existence of any thing; for nothing can be true, nothing does exist, *if things are not what they are.*" Again: "To deny things to be what they are, is a

transgression of the great *law of our nature*, the law of reason; for truth cannot be opposed, but reason must be violated.

5th. "What has been said of acts inconsistent with truth may also be said of many omissions or neglects to act; that is, by these also true propositions may be denied to be true; and then those omissions, by which this is done, must be wrong, for the same reasons with those assigned under the former proposition."

Mr. Wollaston observes here, that "there are some ends, which the nature of things and truth require us to aim at, and at which therefore if we do not aim, *nature* and *truth* are denied. If a man does not desire to prevent evils, and to be happy, he denies both his *own* nature, and the nature and definition of *happiness* to be what they are, and then further, willingly to neglect the *means*, leading to any such end, is the same as not to propose that end, and must fall under the same censure." "If I should not say my prayers at such a certain *hour*, or in such a certain *place* and manner, this would not imply a denial of the existence of God, His providence, or my dependence upon Him; nay, there may be reasons, perhaps, against *that particular* time, place, manner. But if I should *never*

pray to Him, or worship Him at all, such a *total* omission would be equivalent to this assertion, '*There is no God who governs the world, to be avowed*, which, if there is such a being, must be contrary to truth.'

6th. "In order to judge rightly what any thing is, it must be considered not only what it is in itself, or in one respect, but also what it may be in any other respect, which is capable of being denied by facts or practice; and the whole description of the thing ought to be taken in.

"If a man steals a horse, and rides away upon him, he may be said indeed to use him as a *horse*, but not *as the horse of another man*, who gave him no licence to do this. He does not therefore consider him as being what he is, unless he takes in the respect he bears to his true owner. But it is not necessary, perhaps, to consider what he is in respect to his colour, shape, or age; because the thief's riding away with him may neither affirm nor deny him to be of any particular colour, &c. I say, therefore, that those, and *all* those properties, respects, and circumstances, which may be contradicted by practice, are to be taken into consideration. For otherwise the thing to be considered is but imperfectly surveyed; and the whole compass of it being not

taken in, it is taken not as being what it is, but what it is *in part* only, and in other respects perhaps as being *what it is not.*

7th. "Where any act would be wrong, the forbearing that act must be right; likewise, where the omission of any thing would be wrong, the doing of it must be right.

8th. "Moral good and evil are coincident with right and wrong.

9th. "Every act, therefore, of such a being, as is before described, and all those omissions which interfere with truth, are morally evil in some degree or other; the forbearing such acts, and the acting in opposition to such omissions, are morally good; and when any thing may be either done or not done, equally without the violation of truth, that thing is indifferent.

"If A steals a *book* from B, which was pleasing and useful to him; it is true A is guilty of a crime in not treating the book as being what it is, the book of B—who is the proprietor of it, and one whose happiness partly depends upon it; but still if A should deprive B of *a good estate*, of which he was the true owner, he would be guilty of a much greater crime. For if we suppose the book to be worth to him one pound, and the estate L.10,000,

that truth which is violated by depriving B of his book, is in effect violated ten thousand times, by robbing him of his estate.

10th. "If there be more good and evil, distinguished as before, there is religion, and such as may most properly be styled natural.

"By *religion* I mean nothing else but an obligation to do, (under which word I comprehend acts both of body and mind, I say *to do*) what ought not to be omitted, and to forbear what ought not to be done. So that there must be religion, if there are things, of which some ought not to be done, some not to be omitted. But that there are such, appears from what has been said concerning moral good and evil; because that, which to omit would be evil, and which therefore being done would be good as well done, ought certainly by the term *to be done;* and so that, which being done would be evil, and implies such absurdities and rebellion against the supreme Being, as are mentioned under proposition the 6th, ought most undoubtedly not *to be done.*

11th. "That every intelligent, active, and free being should so behave himself, as by no act to contradict truth; or that he should treat every thing as being what it is."

From these propositions, and from the limited

quotations added, by way of illustration, we may learn, when a man acts virtuously, his actions are in conformity to the nature of things. This conformity is the measure or rule of good and evil. There are two points of view in which this doctrine may be viewed; first, as merely stating a fact, that the virtuous actions of mankind are in conformity with a certain constitution of things; and secondly, that the idea of moral obligation, which all men are possessed of, is derived from the perception of this same conformity between our moral actions and the nature of things. With respect to the first point, it may be observed, that if we perform good actions, these actions must bear a certain relative conformity to our particular modes of existence; and, therefore, in doing these actions, we do proclaim them to be what they *really are* in nature. But whether the conception of this conformity be the *cause* or *reason* why men do act virtuously, or from whence they obtain their notions of moral obligation, does not so clearly appear. It is impossible to conceive how the ideas of moral obligations should be excited in me, or that I should be prompted to perform a given moral action, by simply perceiving an agreement or conformity between that action and certain other things; particularly when it is affirm-

ed that this conformity arises from, and consequently must be posterior to, the doing of the same action. If I fly to the succour of my child in distress, can my sympathy be said to be moved, or my sense of duty awakened, by viewing an agreement between the hitherto unperformed act of rendering assistance, and the nature of things? Certainly not. But in all systems of morals this has always been considered an important question to solve: how do we come by the idea of moral obligation or duty? The answers to this question have been various; but not one of them has been placed beyond the reach of controversy. Our ideas of duty are said by some to arise from sympathy; from ideas of usefulness; and others again consider these ideas of duty as arising from original perceptions, resembling in their more common operations our bodily senses or organs of perception. But to inquire here into the reasonableness of all or any of these theoretical opinions, would be premature; as the inquiry will come before us in a more regular manner, when we come to examine the moral systems of some later and more popular writers.

Mr. Wollaston is one amongst the very few writers on morals who sets out in their inquiries with a formal recognition of the free agency of

man. He says, in his first proposition, that all moral actions must be actions of a being capable of distinguishing, choosing, and acting for himself; or, in other words, of an intelligent and free agent. However evident it may appear, that if the human will be not free to choose and to act, there can be no such thing as morality, properly so called; yet it seems rather a matter of surprise, that so great a number of moral writers should have overlooked the question of liberty and necessity, which certainly seems to suggest itself as an important preliminary measure, before we can take a single step either in moral, religious, or political disquisitions. It seems natural to inquire, previous to our commencing to teach others their duties to society, to themselves, and to the great Parent of the universe, whether men have really the powers of free agency, which are so generally implied in our common conversation; if they have not, then our teachings must be vain, and our preachings vain also. What appears to suggest itself as one of the principal reasons why moralists have so frequently neglected to treat of this subject is, that they, in common with all mankind, feel a strong principle of repulsion within themselves against a proposition which, in logical strictness, affirms that man is

a mere machine; and rather than renounce the office of instructors, and impose upon themselves the task of endeavouring to refute a speculative opinion, which it must in candour be confessed has many plausible arguments to support it; they avoid it altogether, and promulgate the principles of human liberty so congenial to the common notions of mankind, and which are sure to meet with a general and ready acquiescence.

It will be necessary here, as in the case of Dr. Clarke, to make a few remarks upon a passage I shall quote from the late Dr. Brown's "Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind." He says, in the fourth volume, "who but the author of such a system, (meaning Wollaston's,) could believe for a moment, that parricide is a crime, only for the same reason which would make it a crime for any one, (and if the great principle of the system be just, a crime of the same amount,) to walk across a room on his hands and feet, because he would then be guilty of the practical untruth of using his hands, not as if they were hands, but as if they were feet, as, in parricide, he would be guilty of the practical untruth of treating a parent as if he were not a parent, but a robber or a murderer?" This appears to be a strange misconception of Wollaston's

reasoning. To treat the crime of parricide as one of as little demerit as walking across a room on one's hands and feet, is not to treat those two actions according to *the nature of things*, or as being what they *really* are, but the contrary. The principles of Mr. Wollaston do not go to destroy all moral distinctions, or to make all virtuous actions of the same amount. "Neither all evil," says he, "nor all good actions are equal." To point out the different degrees of moral approbation and blame which are generally attached to different actions, is one of the principal means he has taken to illustrate his theory. To be satisfied on this point, we have only to turn to the twenty-first and twenty-second pages of his work, and we will see the distinction treated at considerable length, and with more than his usual clearness. He says elsewhere, "to talk to a *post*, or otherwise treat it as if it was a *man*, would surely be an absurdity if not *distraction*. Why? Because this is to treat it *as being what it is not*." Now had Mr. Wollaston seen these remarks of Dr. Brown, he would have answered him in nearly the same words and line of argument. "To treat the act of walking across a room on our hands and feet," he might have said, "as a crime of just the same im-

portance as that of maliciously taking away the life of a parent, would surely be an absurdity, if not absolute distraction. And why? Because this would be treating the act of walking on all fours across a room *as being what it is not.*" This would have been a satisfactory answer to Dr. Brown's remarks, for we have exactly the same species and degree of evidence to prove the dissimilarity between the acts of walking on our hands and feet, and the crime of parricide, as between a wooden *post* and a *man.*

By acting according to *the nature of things*, Mr. Wollaston is careful to point out, that he does not mean, by this phrase, that men should act as nature, at all times and in all places, prompts him; for, as human nature is not altogether rational, this line of conduct would necessarily lead him to do many things which he ought not to do; and refrain from doing those things which it is both his interest and duty to perform. A calm inquiry, a dispassionate examination into the nature of man, will lead us to acknowledge, that he forms a compound of many discordant and widely contrary principles; of much light and shade, and of good and evil. If, therefore, we were to suppose him left to the guidance of mere animal impulse, to grope his way by the ever variable and unsteady

suggestions of his ruder passions, his moral character would never receive any degree of moral amelioration or improvement; but he would wander about in the rugged garb of his primitive barbarism and ignorance. Hence then a principle is wanted to check some of our more violent impulses, which tend to our own unhappiness and destruction, and the unhappiness and destruction of others; and to prompt and give an additional impetus to others, principles of a more latent and salutary description, and which also are equally conducive to our own welfare, and to the welfare of others. This principle is reason; but reason, according to the common interpretation of the word, is not considered by Mr. Wollaston as an infallible standard of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of moral actions. There are so many disputes about what reason is,—so many "opposite right reasons," that nothing can be settled in a satisfactory manner. This seems a very just remark of Mr. Wollaston, but he lays rather too much stress upon it. Reason, even in its mere abstract form, must be always allowed to have great influence in all our moral principles and actions. To reject or deny her authority, and set at nought her counsels, would be both foolish and dangerous. Many of the most important duties

which religion and morality impose upon us, must be regulated by reason; that is, by weighing and balancing the peculiar external circumstances of our condition, and by a constant reference to our immediate or prospective happiness or advantage. We are commanded to be temperate, but neither this rule of duty, nor the canons of Scripture, make known to us what quantity or kind of food or drink is fit and proper for strengthening or sustaining our natures. This information must be derived from reason. We are recommended to be benevolent and charitable to our poorer and more unfortunate brethren of mankind; but the exact measure of charity, the precise line of demarcation where charity should end, and prudence commence, must be considered entirely within the province of reason. We are commanded to worship and to fear the author and upholder of our being, but here also reason must step in, and point out to us the ceremonial nature, the times and places for our devotion and thanksgiving. It is thus with almost all the moral and religious maxims which it is our duty and interest to observe.

But, on the other hand, the absolute sufficiency of reason at all times cannot be maintained, for observation teaches us, that the universe is compound-

ed of alternate ramifications of good and evil to man; and they run, as it were, into each other by such imperceptible gradations, that his experience and judgment are incapable of distinguishing at all times the noxious from the innoxious elements which every way surround him. His knowledge is so circumscribed, and his reason so feeble, that he is unable to penetrate into the more remote relations of things, or to detect those general laws by which the world is governed; and thereby, in endeavouring by reason to trace up consequences to their sources, he is continually liable to repel that which is beneficial and salutary, and to embrace that which is injurious and destructive,—to mistake good for evil, and evil for good. This is the inevitable lot of men. But still it is so ordered, that it is only by cultivating this very faculty of reason, the insufficiency of which we have been pointing out, that he can hope, if not totally to remove, at least to lessen the number and intensity of those evils which nature has doomed him to suffer in his rude and unprotected condition.

Mr. Wollaston disagrees with those who maintain that common sense forms a standard of morals, or who affirm, that certain conceptions of good and evil are born with us. Those innate maxims, he

says, are mistaken for the impressions of early education; and he combats this innate doctrine by the same arguments which have formed the elements of warfare for every disputant on this controversy from his day to the present; namely, that there is scarcely a vice amongst us that has not been called in some period of the history of mankind a virtue; and there is scarcely a virtue which has not been called a vice; that our moral sentiments are at all times so variable and inconstant, and change so much with age, fashion, and external circumstances, that they look extremely unlike the steady and unerring hand of nature. Without entering upon a question about which so much has been written at various times, I may observe, that if by *common sense*, Mr. Wollaston means the same as some latter ethical writers mean by moral sense, then I do not see the applicability of his arguments against this doctrine of innate moral feelings; or, at least, if they be applicable, they militate as powerfully against his own favourite hypothesis as against a moral sense. He says, that when a man performs a given moral action, that action bears a certain relation to the constitution of things; that all men who are constituted in the ordinary manner, have the power of conceiving this relation; and that the

conception of it, and the doing of the action, constitute a moral man. By a *moral sense*, is meant a power or principle which makes us approve, for example, generous and grateful actions instantaneously, without any deliberation or any process of reasoning, and frequently against our own interests and well-being. Now, Mr. Wollaston has not informed us by what means we become possessed of the power of perceiving those relations which exist between moral actions and the nature of things; nor does he show that this power differs in any respects from the *moral sense*, which I have endeavoured to define above. The fact is, that the two doctrines will be found to be nearly the same, upon a close and careful examination. Men are said to approve of moral actions by reason of their moral sense, which operates with the force and rapidity of instinct; and men, according to Wollaston, approve of moral actions by the power of perceiving a relation between those actions and certain other things. Whether these two doctrines be well founded, is another question; but that the arguments which are brought forward against the one may be applied with equal facility against the other, is what must appear to every one who will take the trouble to examine the matter.

But to put this question, whether Mr. Wollaston's moral views be not in their leading features the same as the moral sense hypothesis, in as clear a light as possible, let us take for granted the truth of Mr. Wollaston's standard of morals, namely, that we should treat every thing in nature as being what it *really is*, and then let us see how far the arguments drawn from the inconstancy of our moral sentiments, which are always brought forward to prove the non-existence of a *moral sense*, do apply to this doctrine of our author's. We are told by historians and travellers, that, in some countries, instead of children feeling a lively and pious esteem for their parents, they destroy them without remorse or pity; that theft, which is punished in all civilized nations, was considered as meritorious, according to the Spartan code; and that a promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, which appears so contrary to our notions of utility and decency, is nevertheless practised at this day in most warm and savage regions, without being considered in the least degree improper or disgraceful. Taking these statements, therefore, as indisputable facts, and allowing, for the sake of argument, that they are conclusive against the existence of every universal internal moral sense, do they not strike with equal

force against the doctrine, that morality consists in the conformity of our actions to the nature of things? Do not these variable and opposite practices and notions of morals, go to prove that this conformity is not general, as clearly as they go to prove that there is no *moral sense?* To employ Wollaston's own language and modes of reasoning, let us ask, do not the savage who sacrifices his father, deny this father to be what he *really is*, an object of love, obedience, and respect? Does not the man who steals the goods of another man, deny the latter to be what he *really is*, the real and legitimate proprietor of the goods stolen? And do not those nations who indulge in a promiscuous intercourse, deny that they outrage nature in the smallest degree? Now, if Mr. Wollaston were called upon to establish his doctrine of the general conformity of moral actions to the nature of things, he would labour under precisely the same inconveniencies, from the variation and inconstancy of our moral sentiments and opinions, as the writers do who maintain the doctrine of a moral sense. His supposed opponents might say, "You affirm that all our moral actions bear a certain relation to the nature of things, but what evidence have you to convince us that this relation is general throughout the

various nations of the universe? The conformity of which you speak may have an existence amongst ourselves, or a few neighbouring nations, but you have not the least tittle of evidence to show that this conformity of morality to the nature of things, or the faculty of perceiving it, have any reality amongst the savages of New Holland or the Gambia. You and we both agree that there can be no moral sense, at least it cannot be universal; and we come to this conclusion because some men call that a *virtue* which others call a *vice*. To prove, therefore, that your standard of morals—your relative conformity of moral sentiments to certain things in nature—is true and universal, you are bound to show us, that what actions are honourable, what are beneficial, and what are praiseworthy amongst us, have never been, in any age or country, the subject of doubt or disputation."

Mr. Wollaston's opinions on the freedom of the will, and the close connexions which subsist between our belief in this doctrine and the praise or blame we bestow upon virtuous or vicious actions, seem to have a great resemblance to those maintained by Archbishop King and Bishop Cumberland. On the freedom of the divine will Wollaston thus expresses himself:—"If there is a Supreme Being,

upon whom the existence of the world depends, and nothing can be in it but what he either causes or permits to be, then to own things *to be as they are* is to own what he causes, or at least permits *to be thus caused or permitted;* and this is to take things as he gives them, to go into his constitution of the world, and to submit to his will, revealed in the books of nature. To do this, therefore, must be agreeable to *his will*,—and, if so, the contrary must be disagreeable to it; and, since (as we shall find in due time) there is a perfect rectitude in his will, certainly *wrong*."*

For men to practise vice with a view of obtaining permanent pleasure and advantage from it, is, in fact, to deny that virtue, which is closely and inseparably connected with our welfare, is what *it really is in nature*. The essence of virtue is happiness, and to seek happiness from any other source, is to deny the truth of the relation which subsists between virtue and our well-being. This is, in few words, the substance of the system of morals immediately under our notice. The principle on which Mr. Wollaston grounds his particular views, consists only in the affirming of a simple truism,

* Page 14.

that our happiness and welfare are intimately connected, by the constitution of nature, with our virtuous conduct; a principle which has never, I dare say, been seriously doubted by any ethical writer worthy of the name.

Without, however, extending my remarks to a greater length, I will just observe, that our author does not agree with those who would make pleasure and pain the foundation on which morality is built; nor does he seem inclined to acquiesce with those who place virtue in a sort of discretionary moderation of the passions. Plato's system of making all virtue consist in a *likeness of God*, he passes over lightly, without seeming willing either to censure or to support it.

Though the "*Religion of Nature Delineated*" is not professedly a complete treatise on morals, but an exposition of the principles of natural theology, it may, nevertheless, be considered as a book which may always be read with benefit by those who feel any interest in moral speculations. On its first appearance about a century ago, it was exceedingly popular, but it has long remained on the shelves of libraries unnoticed; nor does it seem likely, that it will ever regain its former portion of popularity. It may be read in universities, where its many

learned quotations will form no inconsiderable recommendation; or by a few speculative men who feel an interest and pleasure in tracing up the gradual advancement of moral science; but for its ever becoming a treatise for general reading, it is manifestly disqualified. There is a considerable share of ambiguity, both in style and argument, spread over the whole surface of the book, and there is also a good deal of what may be termed argumentative trifling. By those who have perused the writings of later moralists, Wollaston will not be keenly relished; to them he will appear heavy, tedious, and unattractive. The seductive charms of eloquence, and the embellishments of a lively imagination, were things which he was either incapable of using, or of which he disdained to avail himself; for he endeavours to appeal to the judgment of his readers, not by fascinating diction, but by strict demonstration. But beneath his general quaintness and aridity of composition, we may discover an acute, original, and subtile understanding; and those who, either from nature or habit, feel inclined "to dig deep for the pearls of knowledge," will find a rich vein of curious speculations and profound remarks on human nature.

CHAPTER X.

MORAL WORKS.

DR. SAMUEL CLARKE.

Dr. Clarke was born on the 11th October 1673, in the city of Norwich, of which his father was Alderman and representative in Parliament.

The Doctor obtained his early education at a grammar school in his native town; and in the seventeenth year of his age, entered himself as a student in Caiu's College, Cambridge, where he very early distinguished himself by his superior classical and scientific attainments.

He was an early and zealous advocate for the Newtonian system of philosophy; and was mainly instrumental in establishing it in the university where he presided. In 1704 he was appointed to preach a lecture, founded by Mr. Boyle, on the

being and attributes of God; and it was from being frequently called upon to perform this duty, that he composed that series of sermons on natural and revealed religion which contain those arguments *a priori*, for the existence and attributes of the Deity, so much and justly celebrated, and which have handed down his name to posterity with honour and renown.

His works are very voluminous, and embrace almost every subject of human inquiry; philosophy, mathematics, natural philosophy, theology, morals, and metaphysics. He died on the 17th May 1729, aged fifty-nine years.

There is a wide and palpable difference between the moral theory of Mandeville and that advanced by Dr. Clarke. In the former, every thing is attributed to the capricious workings of education and habit; and in the latter, the fundamental principles of morality are considered as eternal and unchangeable, and are engraved, as it were, by the finger of the Almighty upon the hearts of all mankind. The theory of Mandeville is characterised by simplicity, clearness, and copiousness of illustration,

while that of Dr. Clarke's has all that ambiguity and perplexing abstruseness, which belong almost exclusively to metaphysical disquisitions.

That part of the doctor's work which treats of the principles of morality, is introductory to a discourse on the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation. This discourse is founded upon fifteen propositions, all which he endeavours to illustrate and establish; but it would take up too much of our time and room to quote and examine them all. The Doctor imagines virtue to consist in regulating our conduct agreeably to certain eternal fitnesses of things established in the universe; or, as he has stated in his first proposition, "That from the eternal and necessary differences of things, there naturally and necessarily arise certain moral obligations, which are of themselves incumbent on all rational creatures, antecedent to positive institutions, and all expectations of rewards and punishments." The Doctor's hypothesis may be viewed under three different aspects; and this which we have just mentioned, may be termed the first, or his high and metaphysical account of the nature and origin of virtue. Secondly, his language may bear an interpretation, that he was favourable to the doctrine

of instinctive principles of morality, or a moral sense. Thirdly, by his saying that certain moral actions ought to be performed because they are *fit* and *good*, he may be considered as countenancing the system of public utility, or general expediency, maintained by some later ethical writers.

With respect to the first light under which Clarke's theory may be viewed, that of eternal and necessary moral obligations or fitnesses of things, little need here be said, as the principle on which this view of morality is founded has been considered in the remarks which have been made on Archbishop King's "*Origin of Evil.*" But it may be observed, in passing, that a great part of the reasoning on the eternal and unalterable nature of virtue is grounded upon a principle of analogy, which Clarke thought existed between our perceptions of good and evil, and our mental perceptions of figure and quality, and other external qualities of matter. He says, "These things are so notoriously plain and self-evident, that nothing but the extremest stupidity of mind, corruption of manners, or perverseness of spirit, can possibly make any man entertain the least doubt concerning them. For a man endowed with *reason* to deny the truth of these things, is the very same as if a man that has

the use of *sight* should, at the same time that he beholds the *sun*, deny that there is any such thing as *light* in the world; or as if a man that understands *geometry* or *arithmetic*, should deny the most obvious and known *proportions of lines and numbers*, and perversely contend that the *whole* is not *equal to all its parts;* or that a *square* is *not double to a triangle* of equal base and height." Again, "The reason which *obliges* every man in *practice*, so to deal always with another, as he would reasonably expect that *others* should, in like circumstances, deal with *him;* is the very same as that which forces him in speculation to affirm, that if one line or number be equal to another, that other is reciprocally equal to it. Iniquity is the very same in *action*, as *falsity* or *contradiction* is in *theory;* and the same cause which makes the one *absurd* makes the other *unreasonable*. Whatever relation or proportion one man, in any case, bears to another, the same that other, when put in like circumstances, bears to him. Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable for *another* to do for *me*, that by the same judgment, I declare reasonable or unreasonable that I, in like case, should do for *him*. And to deny this either in word or in action, is as if a man should contend, that though *two and three*

are equal to *five*, yet *five* is not equal to *two and three.*"

It may be remarked here that there is a great difference between the nature of moral investigations and those which relate to mathematics and to the physical sciences in general; and I do always view with some degree of suspicion those principles and opinions which seem to be grounded exclusively upon the basis of a complete analogy or resemblance between morality and the science of pure calculation. It is true that all truth bears a common relation to the human mind; but there is notwithstanding a very great difference between the manner in which we arrive at moral conclusions, and those which we deduct from calculations in numbers, or from facts in experimental philosophy. In moral science nothing in the reasoning process can be affirmed as being good or bad, true or false, without having the *end* or *final cause* of certain moral or immoral actions present to our views; and it is only to consideration of the final cause or end which regulates our judgment as to the amount of good and evil, truth or falsehood, resulting from any moral proposition. Now, in mathematics the case is somewhat different. All the intermediate steps in a given proposition become ob-

jects of reasoning, are marked with the stamp of truth, may be all employed as elements of reasoning in any other proposition, and their individual peculiar nature is in no way altered or modified by the *end* or *conclusion* to which these intermediate steps lead. Take for example the 47th proposition of Euclid's Elements of Geometry, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the square of the other two sides. The process of reasoning which we employ in this proposition involves many references to other truths contained in definitions, axioms and propositions previously examined, the truth of all which stands completely independent, and is as much an object of the mind's perception, and a conclusion of the understanding, as the end or last result of the reasoning process by which the 47th proposition becomes established, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the square of the other two sides. A process of mathematical reasoning may be compared to a flight of steps, which, though closely and necessarily connected together, may become separately objects of the mind's perception; and these steps lead us in our progress from one chamber of truth, as it were, to another; but they must all be considered, in the eye of abstract truth, as equally true and equally important.

Now, we do not, I conceive, find any thing precisely analogous to this in moral science; good and evil are not things which can be dealt with by rule and compasses, or which can be represented by number and figure. If a man rob his neighbour of his property, and afterwards take away his life, the various means which were used for these purposes, and the divers circumstances which accompanied these foul deeds, become invested with truth and importance *only* because they are connected with the ends or final causes, the robbing of the person and the taking away of life. These means and circumstances may become objects of our mind's contemplations, and topics of censure and of discussion; but they only do so by virtue of their end or ultimate object, which we denominate a highly criminal and vicious action. These means and circumstances may be altered in a thousand different ways, or may be either partially or wholly false; but these considerations would not alter our opinions or feelings on the wickedness of robbery and murder. In the science of morals, we can talk over and discuss the merits or demerits of charity, love, hatred, theft, or murder; and the actions which these words are severally made to represent, may become individual objects of our perception, with-

out being necessarily connected with any given set of means and circumstances; but in mathematics there is no proposition, (barring the primary definitions,) the truth of which can be made manifest without the assistance of some other truths, axioms, or propositions.

The difference in the nature of the terms or instruments employed in reasoning in mathematics, and those employed in moral reasonings, may be looked upon as constituting a very striking dissimilarity between the two sciences. In mathematics the terms have a fixed and permanent meaning attached to them; a square is always a square, a circle is always a circle, and a hundred is always a hundred; but in morals the terms we are obliged to use are far from being of this definite nature; for what is praiseworthy, honourable, dishonest or disreputable, may be variously interpreted; and no small portion of the obscurity and disputations which are to be found amongst ethical writers, may be justly attributed to this want of precision in the use of the terms employed in their disquisitions. Indeed it would fill a volume to point out all the misconceptions and errors which have arisen from this source alone.

But it may readily be granted that, in a certain

qualified sense, the science of morality does not appear to differ essentially from that of natural philosophy. The former as well as the latter depends entirely upon facts, and all its reasonings and conclusions are founded upon the same extensive range of observation and experiment. We must, in both cases, if we are desirous of possessing true knowledge, place nature before us, and observe how she is affected under different circumstances; we must submit human nature to the test of experiment, before we can pronounce man as influenced by hope or fear, love or hatred, desire or aversion, or any of the other multifarious passions which, in all ages and periods of life, agitate the human breast. Nor does there seem to be any ambiguity or impropriety in Dr. Clarke making use of the phrase the *fitness of things*, to denote facts and conclusions both in natural philosophy and in morals. If, for example, we were to say that water extinguishes fire, and, at the same time, gives rise to vapour, by virtue of the *nature* or *fitness of things*, we would be doing nothing more than stating a plain and simple fact or two in language, not perhaps strictly philosophical, but certainly of no very difficult comprehension. In like manner, when we state, in moral philosophy, that man, un-

der certain given circumstances, feels joyful or sorrowful emotions, or is inclined to resent injuries or forgive wrongs, by virtue of the natural *fitness of things*, we do nothing more than state another fact in precisely the same simple and unexceptionable language. These may all be considered as ultimate facts, incapable of being traced to any more general principles or laws of operation.

Dr. Clarke is not, in my humble opinion, consistent with himself, in holding this high standard of moral obligation, that virtue is binding upon us on account of its eternal and immutable nature, and its complete independence of all rewards and punishments, effects and consequences. He affirms that virtue is obligatory, irrespective of any benefit or injury which may befall us in practising it; and he allows that pains and evils often do accompany the doing of good; and with these admissions, the fair and natural inference would be, that virtue should be practised, let the consequences be what they might. But he will not allow of this. He says, "but it is very plain, (as I before intimated,) that the general practice of virtue, in the world can never be supported upon this foot; it being neither possible nor *truly reasonable*, that men by adhering to virtue should part with their lives, if there-

by they eternally deprived themselves of all possibility of receiving any *advantage* from that adherence."

This position seems at variance with the whole tenor of this view of his system; for here it is laid down that a person is not to sacrifice his life for the sake of virtue, as this would be depriving him of all chances of *reward* or *advantage*.

In the second place, Dr. Clarke's system seems to have a considerable resemblance to the doctrine of a moral sense, which some moral writers have maintained. He says, "As it appears thus from the *abstract* and *absolute* reason and nature of things, that all rational creatures *ought*, that is, are *obliged* to take care that their wills and actions be constantly determined and governed by the eternal rule of right and equity; so the certainty and universality of that *obligation* is plainly confirmed, and the force of it particularly discovered and applied to every man by this, that, in like manner, as no one, who is instructed in mathematics, can forbear giving his assent to every geometrical demonstration, of which he understands terms, either by his own study or by having had them explained to him by others; so no man, who either has patience and opportunities to examine and consider

things himself, or has the means of being taught and instructed in any tolerable manner by others, concerning the necessary relations and dependencies of things, can avoid giving his assent to the fitness and reasonableness of his governing all his actions by the law or rule before mentioned, even though his *practice*, through the prevalence of brutish lusts, were most absurdly contradictory to that assent,—that is to say, *by the reason of his mind*, he cannot but be compelled to own and acknowledge that there is really such an *obligation* indispensably incumbent upon him; even at the same time that in the actions of his life he is endeavouring to throw off and despise it,—for the judgment and *conscience* of a man's own mind, concerning the reasonableness and fitness of the thing that his actions should be conformed to such or such a rule or law, is the truest and formalest *obligation*, even more properly and strictly so than any opinion whatsoever of the authority of the giver of a law, or any regard he may have to its sanction by rewards and punishments. For, whoever acts contrary to this *sense* and *conscience* of his own mind is necessarily self-condemned. And the greatest and strongest of all *obligations* is that which a man cannot break through without condemning himself.

The dread of superior power and authority, and the sanction of rewards and punishments, however, indeed, absolutely necessary to the government of frail and fallible creatures, and truly the most effectual means of keeping them in their duty, is really in itself only a *secondary* and *additional* obligation or *enforcement* of the first."

There appears, on many occasions, to be a certain degree of vagueness and ambiguity in the language of Dr. Clarke, notwithstanding his endeavours to give mathematical order and precision to his thoughts; and this want of clearness proceeds, in a great measure, from his employment of the phrases, *good to be done*, and *reasonable to be done*, as well as from the generally loose phraseology in which he has clothed some of his more abstract arguments. He seems to consider these phrases as synonymous. But, it may be asked, does he mean by *good to be done*, that an action which we agree to call virtuous is good merely because it proves beneficial to the person who practises it? or is it because the action is productive of advantage and pleasure to others? If the action be productive of good to the person who performs it, it will also be *reasonable to be done*; and if the action be for the public good, it may also be said to

be *reasonable to be done.* But does the reasonableness of the action arise from the private or public good which is produced by it? If this be not granted, then the phrases, *good to be done*, and *reasonable to be done*, will not be expressive of the same signification.

These few remarks bring me to the third consideration, namely, in what respects Clarke's theory bears an affinity to the doctrine of utility. The more I look into his moral speculations, the more am I inclined to think that he employed the words *fit*, *reasonable*, and *good* as expressive of the same idea—that an action was *fit*, or *reasonable*, or *good* to be done merely because it was productive of benefit. Hundreds of passages might be produced that would be quite unintelligible, if the test of *fitness* in actions were not the advantage or utility which they were calculated to effect.

The late Dr. Brown, in the fourth volume of his "Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind," has taken, in my opinion, an erroneous view of Dr. Clarke's system. "These systems," (meaning Clarke's and Wollaston's,) "independent of their general defect in making *incongruity*—which, as mere *incongruity*, bears no proportion to vice, but is often greatest in the most frivolous improprieties

—the *measure of vice*, assume, it must be remembered, the previous existence of feelings for which all the incongruities of which they speak, and the mere power of discovering such incongruities, are sufficient to account. There must be a principle of *moral regard*, independent of reason, or reason may in vain see a thousand fitnesses and a thousand truths, and would be warmed with the same lively emotions of indignation against an inaccurate time-piece, or an error in arithmetical calculation, as against the wretch who robbed, by every fraud which could elude the law, those who had already little of which they could be deprived, that *he* might riot a *little* more luxuriously, while the helpless, whom he had plundered, were starving around him."

Now I think it will appear, by a careful examination of Dr. Clarke's language and arguments, that by the *fitnesses of things* he does not mean fitness in general, or makes use of that phrase as expressive of the various relations which exist amongst things in general; but he uses the term merely to express, that virtue, by its very nature, is productive of pleasure and benefit, and vice productive of uneasiness and injury. "The true state of the case," says he, "is plainly this:—some things are

in their very nature *good*, and *reasonable*, and *fit* to be done, such as *keeping faith* and *performing equitable compacts*, and the like; other things are in their own nature *absolutely evil*; such as *breaking faith, refusing to perform equitable compacts, cruelly destroying those who have neither directly nor indirectly given any occasion for any such treatment*, and the like." The meaning he attaches to the *fitnesses of things* must be evident to every one who will attend to these his own words. By saying that it is fit and proper to keep faith, and perform equitable compacts, he means nothing more than this, that, by virtue of the nature and constitution of things, the acts of keeping faith and performing equitable compacts tend to individual and general happiness. This must undoubtedly be his meaning, as he also makes use of the word *good* as synonymous with the word *fit*. *Unfitness*, on the other hand, is considered by him as equivalent to *evil;* that is, that certain acts which he has named, such as breaking faith and refusing to perform equitable compacts, are unable to produce good, but do, with unerring certainty, produce evil; either to the individual or to society, or both. This appears to me to be the meaning he attaches to the *fitnesses of things*. It is utterly impossible he could have

considered *congruity* or *incongruity*, *fitness* or *unfitness*, in the abstract, to be the cause of or to have any relation to the obligatory nature of virtue. Such an interpretation may be extorted from his words, where he says, "that, from the eternal and necessary differences of things, there naturally and necessarily arise certain moral obligations." But by these words he merely meant to state a self-evident proposition, that, except there had been original distinctions or differences amongst things in general, the eternal differences between vice and virtue could never have been established. It is not from certain words or phrases, how frequently soever they may be used, but from the general scope and tendency of his reasonings, that we are entitled to pronounce what an author's opinions really are. And hence we can be at no loss, if we attend to the Doctor's reasonings, to see clearly, that, by the *fitness of things* of which he speaks, he wishes his readers to understand that constitution of things which obliges men, in *some measure*, to feel the force of moral obligations, irrespective of any consideration, and to perform certain moral actions, without taking in *all cases* the consequences which might follow from them. His aim throughout the whole treatise on morals is evidently to controvert

the position of Mr. Hobbes, who, the Doctor says, affirmed that there was no original or absolute difference between good and evil, and that our ideas of duty towards God arose from his irresistible power, and our ideas of obligation towards man from positive political compacts. If he had meant by the words *fit* and *reasonable* what Dr. Brown says he meant by them, his arguments against Hobbes would have been powerless, and of no avail. But, if we attend to what our author says on this branch of his subject, we will be led to conclude, that by its being *fit* and *reasonable* that man should feel the force of moral obligations antecedent to any political compacts, could not, in the nature of things, be prior to our ideas of moral obligation, because the very existence of these compacts presupposes certain previous moral conceptions in the mind.

But though the Doctor strenuously contends, in many places, in opposition to Hobbes, for a portion of virtuous feeling independent of any reference to consequences, yet his general language is calculated to confirm the opinion, that when he talks of the eternal and immutable connexions of things, he had simply floating in his mind the invariable connexion between virtue and happiness, and vice and misery. He observes,—"In order to establish a

just and suitable difference between the respective fruits or effects of virtue and vice; the nature of things, and the constitution and order of God's creation, was originally such, that the observance of the eternal rules of piety, justice, equity, goodness, and temperance, does of itself plainly *tend, by direct and natural consequence,* to make all creatures happy; and the contrary practice, to make them miserable. This is evident in general, because the practice of universal virtue is (in imitation of the divine goodness,) the practice of that which is *best* on the *whole;* and that which tends to the benefit of the *whole,* must of necessary consequence, *originally and in its own nature,* tend also to the benefit of every individual *part* of the creation. More particularly, a *frequent and habitual contemplating* the infinitely excellent *perfection* of the Almighty Creator, and all-wise Governor of the world, and our most bountiful Benefactor, so as to excite in our minds a suitable adoration, love, and imitation of these perfections. A *regular employing* all our *powers* and *faculties* in such a design, and to such a purpose only, as they were originally fitted and intended for by nature, and a due subjecting all our *appetites* and *passions* to the government of sober and modest reason, are

evidently the directest means to obtain such *settled peace and solid satisfaction of mind*, as is the first foundation, and the principal and necessary ingredient of all true happiness. The *temperate* and *moderate enjoyment* of all the good things of this present world, and of the pleasures of life, according to the measures of right reason and simple nature, is plainly and confessedly the certainest and most direct method to preserve the *health and strength of the body*. And the practice of universal justice, equity, and benevolence, is manifestly (as has been before observed,) as direct and adequate a means to promote *the general welfare and happiness of men in society*, as any physical motion, or geometrical operation, is to produce its natural effect. So that if all men were truly virtuous, and practised these rules in such a manner that the miseries and calamities arising usually from the numberless follies and vices of man were prevented; undoubtedly this great truth would evidence itself visibly in fact, and appear experimentally in the happy state and condition of the world. On the contrary, neglect of God, and insensibleness of our relation and duty towards Him; *abuse and unnatural misapplication of the powers and faculties* of our minds; inordinate appetites, *and*

unbridled and furious passions; necessarily fill the mind with *confusion, trouble,* and *vexation.* And intemperance naturally brings *weakness, pains,* and *sicknesses* into the body. And mutual *injustice* and *iniquity; fraud, violence,* and *oppression; wars* and *desolations; murders, rapine, and all kinds of cruelty,* are sufficiently plain causes of the *miseries and calamities of men in society.* So that the original constitution, order, and *tendency* of things is evidently enough *fitted* and designed to establish *naturally* a just and suitable difference in general between vice and virtue, by their respective fruits or effects."

What appears to have given rise to Dr. Brown's misconception of Clarke's meaning is, that the former thought that, by *fitness* or *reasonableness,* the latter had no view of including the *end,* or final cause of any given moral action. "*Fitness,*" says Dr. Brown, "as understood by every one, is obviously a word expressive only of *relation.* It indicates skill, indeed, in the artist, whatever the end may be; but, considered abstractly from the nature of the *end,* it is indicative of *skill only.*" Now, with all due deference to so great an authority, I think it may be affirmed, that every one does not consider the word fitness as having no *relation to an*

end. In fact, it is a word almost synonymous with *end itself.* It is utterly inconceivable how it can denote skill without having a reference to an end. If there be fitness or skill displayedi n a time-piece, (Dr. B.'s own metaphor,) these qualities must arise from the *fitness* or *skilfulness* of the instrument to denote time accurately, which is the *end* for which the instrument was made. If *fitness* be a term of relation, it can have no meaning at all when abstracted from that to which it relates. Let us suppose A to be a moral action, and C the result of it, and B an idea of *fitness,* suggested to the mind from contemplating A and C. It must be self-evident that if A and C be taken away, B can have no existence, otherwise B must not be an idea of relation, but something independent of A and C. So, in like manner, our ideas of moral fitness are inseparable from the *end,* or good and evil consequences of our actions.

An author may always be considered as a better authority for the meaning of his own terms, than any of his commentators or critics can possiblybe; and I think no one who reads the following passage, but who must be well convinced that the word fitness, as used by Clarke, is employed to represent the *end* or *final object* of certain things. "That thereare *dif-*

ferences of things, and *different relations, respects,* or *proportions* of some things towards others; is as evident and undeniable, as that one *magnitude* or *number* is greater, equal to, or smaller than another. That from their *different relations* of different things, there necessarily arises an *agreement* or *disagreement,* of some things with others; or a *fitness* or *unfitness* of the application of different things or different relations one to another; is likewise as plain, as that there is any such thing as *proportion* or *disproportion* in *geometry* and *arithmetic,* or *uniformity* or *disformity* in comparing together the respective *figures of bodies.* Further, that there is a *fitness* or *suitableness* of certain *circumstances* to certain *persons,* and an *unsuitableness* of others; founded in the *nature of things,* and the *qualification* of *persons,* antecedent to all positive appointment whatever. Also from the different relations of *different persons one to another,* there necessarily arises a fitness or unfitness of certain *manners of behaviour* of some persons towards others; is as manifest, as that the properties which flow from the essences of different *mathematical figures,* have different *congruities* or *incongruities* between themselves; or that, in mechanics certain *weights* or *powers* have very different forces, and

different effects upon one another, according to their different *distances* or different *positions* and *situations* in respect to each other. For instance, That God is infinitely superior to men, is as clear as that *infinity* is larger than a *point*, or *eternity* longer than a *moment*. And it is as certainly *fit* that men should honour and worship, obey and imitate God, rather than on the contrary in all their actions endeavour to dishonour and disobey Him; as it is certainly true that *they have* an entire dependence on Him; and he, on the contrary, can in no respect receive any advantage from *them*; and not only so, but also that his will is as certainly and unalterably *just* and *equitable* in giving his commands, as his power is *irresistible* in requiring submission to it. Again, 'tis a thing absolutely and necessarily *fitter* in itself that the supreme author and creator of the universe, should govern, order, and direct all things to certain constant and *regular ends*, than that every thing should be permitted to go on at adventures, and produce uncertain effects merely by *chance*, and in the utmost confusion, without any determinate view or design at all. 'Tis a thing manifestly *fitter* in itself, that the all-powerful Governor of the world should do always what is *best* in the whole, and what tends most to the universal *good* of the whole

creation; than that he should make the whole continually *miserable;* or than that, to satisfy the unreasonable desires of any particular depraved natures, he should at any time suffer the order of the whole to be *altered* and *perverted.* Lastly, it is a thing evidently and infinitely more *fit* that any one particular *innocent and good being* should, by the supreme ruler and disposer of all things, be placed and preserved in an *easy and happy estate;* than that, without any fault or demerit of its own, it should be made *extremely, remedilessly,* and *endlessly miserable.* In like manner, in men's dealings and conversing one with another, it is undeniably more *fit,* absolutely, and in the nature of the thing itself, that all men should endeavour to promote the *universal good and welfare of all;* than that all men should be continually contriving the *ruin and destruction of all.* 'Tis evidently more *fit,* even *before* all positive bargains and compacts, that men should deal one with another according to the known rules of *justice* and *equity,* than that every man for his own personal advantage should, without scruple, disappoint the most *reasonable and equitable expectations* of his neighbours, and *cheat* and *defraud,* or *spoil by violence,* all others without restraint. Lastly, it is

without dispute more *fit* and *reasonable* in itself, that I should *preserve the life* of an innocent man, that happens at any time to be in my power, or deliver him from imminent danger, though I have never made any promise so to do, than that I should suffer him to perish, or take *away his life*, without any reason or provocation at all."

Here we may plainly perceive the sense in which Dr. Clarke uses the words *fit* and *reasonable*. They have here a direct and evident reference to *ends* or final causes. We have here stated the end of worship to God; and what *end* the Almighty has in view in his arrangement of nature and providence, namely, the good of the whole of the human race; and how *fit* and *reasonable* it is that we should endeavour to imitate Him in this respect. And further, how *necessary* and *fit* that justice and equity should be always practised by us, if we wish to promote the happiness and welfare of the community; and how *fit* and *proper* that we should practise acts of humanity and benevolence, that we may feel that inward peace and self-satisfaction, which these actions are calculated to excite.

The Doctor's observations on rewards and punishments are very contradictory, but this contradiction does not so much arise from his method of

treating the subject, as from the nature of the subject itself. It must be evident to every one, that all moral actions must have been performed before the pleasure or benefit resulting from them could have been felt; and as this must have been truly the case with all the virtues, if we look at them from their commencement, it is somewhat difficult to conceive how rewards and punishments, or good and evil, could have been considered as the primary causes of those moral actions. And yet is not the opinion in unison with the common notions of all mankind? and does it not lie at the foundation of all moral and religious instruction, that rewards and punishments, or benefit or misery, are the incentives to and primary causes of all morality among men? Here, then, is a seeming contradiction in the very nature of things, or perhaps, more properly speaking, in the way we perceive them,—a contradiction clearly perceived by Dr. Clarke, and which he has endeavoured to remove, but without effect. In his third proposition he says, "that the same eternal moral obligations, which are of themselves incumbent indeed on all rational creatures, antecedent to any respect of particular rewards and punishments, must yet necessarily and certainly be attended with rewards and punishments. He en-

deavours to prove this from the attributes of God, and from the necessity there is to vindicate his laws and government. But his efforts, however plausible, must be pronounced to be unavailing. He cannot make it appear how these eternal moral obligations, which he says are antecedent to all rewards and punishments, *must* necessarily be attended with these same rewards and punishments. Admirably constituted as his mind seems to have been for coping with speculative difficulties, it here gives evident signs of its own insufficiency for the task assigned to it.

As a moral writer, Dr. Clarke cannot be considered as standing in the first class; but, as far as he has entered into the subject, he displays the same degree of acuteness and force of argumentation which are so conspicuous in every other topic which has fallen under his notice. It must be remembered that he has made the theoretical principles of morality subservient to another object,—that of establishing the truth of natural and revealed religion. His language has been characterised by a late eminent philosopher as pompous and tautological; but this, if applied generally to his writings, is, I conceive, unmerited censure, for his language in many places is chaste, correct, and forcible, and as far re-

moved from bombast and emptiness as can well be imagined. Perhaps there is not so fine a specimen of abstract reasoning on moral subjects to be found anywhere as in his illustrations of his first proposition, where he notices more particularly the theory of Hobbes. Here the Doctor has happily brought forward all that has been, or likely can be, said in the shape of argument against the moral speculations of that celebrated writer on human nature. There is a deep sense of the importance of virtue running through the whole of Clarke's writings; and though abstract principles and subtile reasonings have not, in the opinion of many, much influence in moving the heart and affections, or in forming noble sentiments of virtue in the mind, yet no one, I think, can peruse his works without feeling a sensible degree of moral and intellectual improvement.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARACTERISTICS.

EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER, third Earl of Shaftesbury, was born in London in the year 1671. He became from his birth an object of his grandfather's tender regard, who undertook the care of his education, and placed him under the charge of a Mrs. Birtch, who had acquired from her father considerable classical knowledge. Such are said to have been the effect of her judicious instructions upon her noble pupil, that when he had attained his eleventh year he was well versed in Grecian and Roman literature, for which, it is affirmed, he retained a strong predilection to the end of his life. He was placed first at a private school, and afterwards at that of Winchester, which, in consequence of meeting with some ill treatment from the other boys of the school, he left in disgust, and commenced his travels on the Continent, under the care and

protection of a Mr. Daniel Denovan, a Scotch gentleman well qualified for the task.

On his return from abroad he was offered a seat in the House of Commons, which he then refused; but five years afterwards he came into the House, for the borough of Poole in Dorsetshire. But he took little share in legislative transactions, and he quitted the Commons in a short time, and retired into a private life, which seemed more congenial to his habits and dispositions.

Having returned to a private capacity, he eagerly engaged in literary pursuits, and, in the character of a student of physic, spent a considerable portion of his time in Holland, associating with Bayle, Le Clerc, and other men of letters. As Bayle was not aware of his real name, he took the following method to let him into the secret:—He caused a common friend to ask him to dinner, with the view of introducing him to Lord Ashley. The morning of the day on which this engagement was to be fulfilled, Bayle called upon Lord Ashley, who pressed him to stay. That is impossible, said Bayle, for I have a positive appointment to meet with Lord Ashley at dinner. This incident created a good deal of harmless mirth, and the discovery strengthened their mutual friendship.

On the death of his father he succeeded to the peerage. He continued to support the measures of King William's government till the death of that prince; and on the accession of Queen Anne he finally relinquished public affairs, and betook himself again to literary and philosophical pursuits. In 1703 he made a second visit to Holland. In the common biographical accounts of him, he is stated to have begun his career as an author in 1708; but in some editions of his works it is stated that his "*Enquiry concerning Virtue*" was first published in 1699, which is nine years earlier than that period which is usually ascribed as the time when he commenced author. His "*Letters on Enthusiasm*" were followed by his "*Moralist, a Philosophical Rhapsody*," his "*Sensus Communis*," and his "*Essay on Freedom, Wit, and Humour.*" In 1709 he married a Miss Ewer, by whom he had no issue. In 1710 his "*Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*," was published in London; and in 1711, after taking leave of his friends by letters, he went in quest of health through France to Italy, where he died, at the premature age of forty-two. In Italy he prepared his "*Judgement of Hercules*," and his Letter concerning Design. His Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times, had

been published in 1711, but was in Italy carefully revised and corrected, and after his death given to the world, accompanied with prints designed by himself, and executed under his own immediate inspection. Five years afterwards appeared his Letters to Lord Molesworth, which complete the list of his writings.

Some men of genius write for their own age, and some for posterity; some get their meed of praise during their lifetime, when alone it can be relished, while others are doomed to go through a long and painful purgatory of neglect and misrepresentation before they become qualified for honour and renown. Were I disposed to form a full and correct estimate of the share of real happiness which both classes of authors enjoy, I would be constrained to give the preponderance to those who are eminent in their own day, for they alone may be said to experience all the real pleasure which fame and distinction can bestow. Posthumous glory is very uncertain, and is but a poor solace for present disappointment, and is but ill calculated to revive or exhilarate a spirit sunk into the tomb by the pressure of undeserved censure or unmerited neglect. On

the other hand, such are the propensities of our nature, that present distinction is generally coupled in the mind with future praise; and he who is eminent in his own lifetime feels but little to induce him to give up the fond anticipation, that he will be equally eminent in ages to come.

These few remarks, though not immediately connected with the subject of morals, seem to arise naturally from the consideration of the fate of the writings of Lord Shaftesbury,—a man whose extensive acquirements, brilliancy of imagination, and poignancy of wit, threw a lustre over the era in which he lived. It seems difficult to account satisfactorily for the neglect into which the writings of his Lordship have fallen in later times. The predisposing cause of this neglect may perhaps be surmised, and that is, that light and airy eloquence, and sprightliness of wit, and raillery, which pervade the whole of his Lordship's writing, and which, however suitably and pleasantly they may be employed on proper subjects, do but ill accord with the grave austerity of philosophy. Mankind do often associate lightness of embellishment with shallowness of thought; and even philosophers find it difficult to shake off the same connexion in their minds. Hence his Lordship is looked upon

more in the light of an accomplished and ingenious sophist, than a sincere moralist or profound thinker. Besides, many observations throughout various parts of his works, particularly in the two treatises entitled the "*Moralist, a Philosophical Rhapsody*," and "*Miscellaneous Reflections*," clearly show that he was heterodox in his religious opinions, and this circumstance even in his own day, had a considerable effect in checking that extensive popularity and respect which his virtues and talents ought, under the ordinary auspices of public favour, to have secured to his writings and opinions.

His thoughts on morality are contained in a part of his well-known book, in three volumes, entitled, "Characteristics." It would be impossible in this short notice of his moral opinions, to give a full and correct abstract of all the grave and important subjects of inquiry which are brought under discussion by his Lordship. It will be necessary for us to be very general in our remarks; to be content with sketching the broad and more prominent outlines of his moral system, and to leave the reader, should he think fit, to fill up the vacant parts of the picture by a careful perusal of the book itself.

The philosophical sagacity of Bacon, and the metaphysical disquisitions of Locke, had, after

the appearance of their writings, instilled into men's minds, all over Europe, but particularly in England, a keen relish for speculation and inquiry; and amidst the many important and highly interesting subjects, which began about Shaftesbury's time to form topics of controversy, the principles of morality and religion held a conspicuous place. One set of philosophers contended that religion and virtue were so nearly allied, their identity was so completely established by the common notions of mankind, as well as by abstract principle, that the words which designated both might, without any hesitation, be pronounced to be purely convertible terms. No man could be religious without being virtuous, nor any be virtuous without being religious. On the other hand, it was as confidently maintained, that though this doctrine appeared plausible in theory, it was false in fact; for the world furnished numerous instances, where a firm belief in religious opinions, and a strict observance of the external forms and ceremonies of devotion, were joined with dishonest principles, and excessive depravity and corruption of manners. As the great mass of a nation, it was observed, have always a firm belief in the leading principles of the popular religion, and as the number of speculative dissenters

from the faith will always necessarily be few in number, and destitute of much influence in society; it seems difficult to account, in a satisfactory manner, for that great portion of iniquity and vice which is found in the world, upon the supposition, that a speculative belief in the fundamental principles of the prevailing religion has a considerable effect in restraining the perverseness of human nature. Besides, it was affirmed, that it was a matter of fact, beyond all controversy, that there have been men in all ages who have openly avowed their disbelief in all revealed religion; and some have even gone so far in their scepticism, as to doubt the truth of the principles of theism itself; who have, nevertheless, been conspicuous for their general humanity of conduct, and rectitude of principle. This being the state of controversy on both sides, my Lord Shaftesbury, considering the disputants to be too much heated with zeal and party-spirit ever to be able to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the question, is desirous of being an umpire in the dispute, and of deciding the knotty point in a sort of judicial manner, by a summing up of evidence on both sides; or, to use his own words, "to inquire what *honesty* or *virtue* is considered in itself, and in what manner it is influenced by religion; how far

religion necessarily implies virtue; and whether it be a true saying, "*that it is impossible for an atheist to be virtuous, or show any real degree of honesty or virtue.*"

After stating the various opinions men have of a first cause, or moving spirit of the universe, he passes on to the consideration of his first proposition,—to inquire what honesty or virtue is in itself. In perusing this inquiry, he touches on a variety of important topics, such as the private or selfish passions, moral beauty and deformity, and the existence of absolute evil; and after numerous acute and valuable remarks on these points, as well as others, he comes all at once, without the aid of any connected chain of reasoning, to this conclusion, that virtue is in itself "*a certain just disposition, or proportionable affection of a rational creature towards the moral objects of right and wrong.*" This was considered by the noble author as the most complete definition of virtue that ever was given. But every reader will perceive it is really no definition at all; for the thing to be explained is left in precisely the same situation in which he found it. We may ask, what is the nature or essence of those moral objects of right and wrong? These moral objects constitute, *themselves*, all that

men know or state of virtue. This just and proportionable disposition towards virtue or merit cannot constitute either. Indeed, the definition, view it in any light we may, is extremely absurd; and besides, it was quite unnecessary. 'For all the ends his Lordship seems to have had in view, in coming to a decision on the controversy under his consideration, he might have spared himself the trouble of entering into a long discussion, in order to furnish us with an abstract idea or conception of the nature or essence of virtue. For general reasoning, and purposes of instruction, mankind are pretty well agreed about what virtue is; nor will they ever enter, with any spirit, into elaborate investigations, which may be calculated to render that mysterious and doubtful, which, in their opinion, is so clear to their understandings.

After this definition of virtue, his Lordship endeavours to show, that nothing can operate injuriously upon the principle of virtue in man, but that which takes away the sense of right and wrong, creates a wrong sense of virtue, or causes the right sense to be opposed by contrary affections. Theism, atheism, demonism, or any other religious or irreligious system, can never, in his opinion, eradicate the original and primary notions of right and wrong

which are planted in human nature. The belief in some system of theology may greatly impede the practice of virtue, corrupt the moral sense, and turn it from its proper objects; but its total extinction is impossible, so long as the individual is in full possession of his bodily and mental faculties.

As he proceeds in his discussions concerning the nature of honesty or virtue, he enters upon an important question, and considers it at great length; namely, *what degree of influence religious opinions have on virtue.* And it may be remarked, that though his Lordship sets out with great professions of candour and impartiality, he evidently takes for granted the truth of one of the hypothesis, that virtue has a permanent foundation, independent of any theistical opinions. The dispute he considers as only relating to the *degrees* of influence which religion has ever to virtuous affections. As the subject is interesting, we will hazard a few remarks upon it.

It is a just observation of Mandeville, that, in treating of human nature, we ought not to consider what man *might,* or *should* be, but what he *really* is in the world. Keeping this piece of advice in our recollections, we must, from ever so

partial a view of the conduct of man in society, confess that religious opinions have a very extensive and powerful influence over him. Nor is it of any consequence in the present argument, what the peculiar nature of these opinions may be, nor whether they are well or ill-founded; it is only with the fact of their extensive influence that we have to do here. Whether this influence be of a salutary or mischievous description will chiefly depend upon the reasonableness and virtuous character of the theistical hypothesis on which the theology of any particular people is founded. Those who have degraded and contemptible ideas of the nature and attributes of the Sovereign of the universe; who consider Him as being actuated by no good or benevolent motive, but one who delights in a capricious and cruel exercise of his will and power, and who mocks at the misery of mankind; those who entertain such opinions of a Deity, will have a religion full of superstitious fear, self-abasement, and the most abject humiliation; trying by all means which their disordered imaginations can suggest to appease his wrath, and soften down the obduracy of his disposition by a prostration of the understanding, by pompous exhibitions and ridiculous sacrifices. On the other hand, those who con-

sider Him as an all-powerful, wise, and good being, clothed with those attributes of order, wisdom, and that wonderfully discriminating care which we may plainly see in every thing he has created, will venerate him in a more virtuous and rational manner, endeavouring to imitate Him in those godly and praiseworthy actions which it is his very nature to practise. On this point Lord Shaftesbury judiciously observes, "If there be a belief or conception of a DEITY, who is considered as *worthy* and *good*, and admired and reverenced as such; being understood to have, besides mere power and knowledge, the highest excellence of nature, such as renders him justly amiable to all; and if, in the manner this sovereign and mighty Being is represented, or, as he is historically described, there appears in him a high and eminent regard to what is good and excellent, a concern for the good of *all*, and an affection of benevolence and love towards the *whole*; such an example must undoubtedly serve, (as above explained) to raise and increase the affection towards virtue, and help to submit and subdue all our affections to that alone.

"Nor is this good effected by example merely. For where the theistical belief is entire and perfect, there must be a steady opinion of the superintend-

ency of a supreme Being, a witness and spectator of human life, and conscious of whatsoever is felt or acted in the universe: so that in the perfectest recess or deepest solitude, there must be *One* still presumed remaining with us, whose presence singly must be of more moment that that of the most august assembly on earth. In such a presence, it is evident, that as the *shame* of guilty actions must be the greatest of any, so must the *honour* be of well-doing, even under the unjust censure of a world—and in this case, it is very apparent how conducing a *perfect theism* must be to virtue, and how great deficiency there is in *atheism.*"

Nothing can be more destitute of truth than the assertion of some philosophers, that religious opinions can have no good effect on our moral natures. The history of the world furnishes examples without number of the salutary influence which sound theological opinions exercise over the private and social virtues. Nor does the history of superstition form any considerable objection to what is here advanced. It only proves one thing, and it is this, that religion is a powerful machine, capable of being turned to dangerous and unworthy, as well as salutary purposes. It is calculated to engross the

whole man, and to become the almost sole moving principle of all his actions. Indeed, though the dark and dreary ages of superstition are now said to have passed away for ever, we may nevertheless see, in our daily intercourse with the world, what a firm hold religion still has on the human mind. Nor is there any thing, as some conceive, wonderful in the matter. The religious belief of rewards and punishments in some future state of existence, operates in the same manner, and on the same principles, as a belief in the existence and certainty of human laws and punishments. And what moralist has ever contended that human laws and punishments were not necessary as a stimulant to the virtuous principle, and a restraint upon wickedness and crime? Now it may be observed, that the way, and the only way, in which civil punishment acts upon the mind, is by a *belief* of its existence, and the certainty of its invariable application. Those, therefore, who believe in the existence of a state of future retribution—who consider that certain actions are sure of being in a certain manner severely punished hereafter—such people must be allowed to carry about with them some check, at least, to immorality and licentiousness. It is of no consequence to this question, considered merely in the

light of an argumentative one, whether it is rational or philosophical to believe in future rewards and punishments; this does not affect the vital part of the question; for all that we have to consider here is, whether a man who firmly believes that cruelty, malignity, treachery, and every other species of wickedness, will meet with a certain and severe punishment in another state of being, will not be more likely to refrain from practising immorality to the same extent as a man who has no such belief? Making every possible allowance for differences on religious topics, still, I think, no one who has the slightest knowledge of human nature, but must confess that the *believer* in future punishments carries with him a certain degree of security against vicious and immoral behaviour, of which the *unbeliever* is completely destitute.

The fundamental principles of sound theology seem calculated, from their very nature, to have a favourable effect on the dispositions of men; inspiring them with fortitude of mind, and gentleness, and benignity of temper. "The admiration," says Shaftesbury, "and love of order, harmony, and proportion, in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the temper, advantageous to social affection, and highly assistant to *virtue*; which is in itself no other

than the love of order and beauty in society. In the meanest subjects of the world, the appearance of *order* gains upon the mind, and draws the affections towards it. But if *the order of the world itself* appears just and beautiful, the admiration and esteem of *order* must run higher, and the elegant passion or love of beauty, which is so advantageous to virtue, must be more improved by its exercise, in so ample and magnificent a subject; for it is impossible that such a divine order should be contemplated without ecstasy and rapture; since in the common subjects of science and the liberal arts, whatever is according to just harmony and proportion, is so transporting to those who have any knowledge or practice of the kind."

When we look carefully over the world, and observe the influence of religion, I think it will appear that it does not operate equally upon all the good and evil passions of men; over some it has, generally speaking, a considerable, and over others a less degree of influence. It may be affirmed, for example, that over the public virtues and vices of men, the belief in any theological system has not any powerful control. Men who fill public stations in the world are elevated, to a certain degree, above the sphere of the common sympathies of hu-

man nature; and are almost always moved to action by the love of fame, power, or worldly splendour and distinction. On the contrary, the private virtues and vices are more susceptible of religious impressions; and it is amongst the social feelings and affections of our nature, that we may look for the happiest as well as the worst effects which religious opinions have on mankind.

There are four leading principles laid down by his Lordship in his writings, and which may be said to form the ground-work of all his reflections on morals. These principles when united constitute the feature, or characteristic circumstance, by which his moral theory may be distinguished from those of others.

First, He maintains a moral sense, in the strict signification of that term.

Secondly, That virtue must arise from a proper balancing of our affections and passions.

Thirdly, He maintains the mere practice of virtue from lively perceptions of its innate beauty and sublimity.

And, fourthly, That no action can be said to be a moral one, which arises from a selfish motive, however refined. It must be the result of pure

benevolence; springing from no other motive than that of "loving virtue for its own sake."

First, With respect to a moral sense, he observes —"There is in reality no rational creature whatsoever, who knows not that when he voluntarily offends or does harm to any one, he cannot fail to create an apprehension and fear of like harm, and consequently a resentment and animosity in every creature who observes him; so that the offender must needs be conscious of being liable to such treatment from every one, as if he had in some degree offended all.

"Thus, offence and injury are always known as punishable by every one; and equal behaviour, which is therefore called *merit*, as rewardable and well-deserving from every one. Of this even the wickedest creature living must have a sense, so that if there be any further meaning in this *sense* of right and wrong; if, in reality, there be any *sense* of this kind which an absolute wicked creature has not; it must consist in a real antipathy or aversion to *injustice* or *wrong*, and in real affection or love towards *equity* and *right*, for its own sake, and on the account of its own natural beauty and worth.

"It is impossible to suppose a mere sensible creature originally so ill constituted and unnatural, as

from the moment he comes to be tried by sensible objects, he should have no one good passion towards his kind, no foundation either of pity, love, kindness, or social affection. It is full as impossible to conceive, that a rational creature coming first to be tried by rational objects, and receiving into his mind the images or representations of justice, generosity, gratitude, or other virtue, should have no *liking* of these, or *dislike* of their contraries; but be found obstinately indifferent towards whatever is presented to him of this sort. A soul, indeed, may as well be without *sense*, as without admiration in the things of which it has any knowledge. Coming, therefore, to a capacity of seeing and admiring in this new way, it must needs find a beauty and a deformity in moral acts, there is at least an *imaginary one* of full force. Though perhaps the thing itself should not be allowed in nature, the imagination or fancy of it must be allowed to be from nature alone. Nor can any thing besides art, and strong endeavour, with long practice and meditation, overcome such a *natural prevention*, or *prepossession* of the mind, in favour of this moral distinction."

With regard to the second principle, he advances, that virtue must arise from a proper balancing of

our affections and passions: he observes, "It may seem strange, perhaps, to speak of natural affections as *too strong*, or as self-affections *too weak*. But to clear this difficulty, we must call to mind what has been already explained, 'that *natural affection* may, in particular cases, be excessive, and in an unnatural degree.' As when pity is so overwhelming as to destroy its own end, and prevent the succour and relief required; or as when love to the offspring proves such a fondness as destroys the parent, and consequently the offspring itself, and notwithstanding it may seem harsh to call that *unnatural* and *vicious*, which is only an extreme of some natural and kind affection; yet it is most certain, that whenever any single good affection of this sort is ever great, it must be injurious to the rest, and detract in some measure from their free and natural operation. For a creature possessed of such an immoderate degree of passion, must of necessity allow too much of that *one*, and too little to *others* of the same character; and equally natural and useful to their end. And this must necessarily be the occasion of partiality and injustice, whilst only *one duty* or *natural part* is earnestly followed, and *other parts*, or *duty*, neglected, which

should accompany it, and perhaps take place and be preferred.

"Now, in particular cases, *public affection*, on the one hand, may be too high; so *private affection* may, on the other hand, be *too weak*. For if a creature be self-neglectful, and insensible of danger; or if he merit such a degree of passion in any kind, as is useful to preserve, sustain, or defend himself; this must certainly be esteemed vicious in regard of the design and end of nature. She herself discovers this in her own method, and stated rule of operation. It is certain that her provisionary care and concern for the whole animal, must at least be equal to her concern for a single part or member. Now to the several parts she has given, we see proper affections suitable to their interest and security; so that even without our consciousness they act in their own defence, and for their own benefit and preservation. Thus *an eye*, in its natural state, fails not to shut together, of its own accord, unknowingly to us, by a peculiar caution and timidity; which if it wanted, however we might intend the preservation of our eye, we should not in effect be able to preserve it by any observation or forecast of our own. To be wanting, therefore, in those principal affections, which re-

spect the good of the whole constitution, must be a vice and imperfection, as great surely in the principal part, (the soul and temper,) as it is in any of those inferior and subordinate parts, to want the self-preserving affections which are proper for them.

"And thus the affections towards private good become necessary and essential to goodness. For though no creature can be called good or virtuous merely for possessing these affections; yet, since it is impossible that the public good or good of the system can be preserved without them, it follows that a creature really wanting in them, is in reality wanting in some degree to goodness and natural rectitude; and may thus be esteemed vitious and defective.

"It is thus we say of a creature, in a kind way of reproof, that he is *too good*, when his affection towards others is so warm and zealous as to carry him even beyond his part; or when he really acts beyond it; not through too warm a passion of that sort, but through an over-cool one of another, or through merit of some self-passion to restrain him within due bounds."

In reference to these two divisions of Shaftesbury's moral system—that of a moral sense, and

the balancing of the affections, we shall say nothing at present, as these subjects will be fully canvassed hereafter in a more proper place. In writing essays like the present, one great difficulty is to avoid repetition; and this principally arises from the great similarity which exists amongst all the various moral theories. Many of these systems were distinguished from one another only by slight shades of difference in principle; and when it is considered that the illustration must be drawn from the same sourse—the passions and affections of man—which have been, and still are, the same in all countries, it will not appear surprising that the marks of distinction amongst those systems should, in many cases, become almost evanescent and imperceptible. To avoid repetition in argument entirely is impossible, but to do so, as much as we can, is nevertheless our duty. It is this consideration which has induced me to postpone any notice of these important inquiries in a moral sense, and the nature and constitution of the passions, till I come to examine those moral writings which are almost exclusively devoted to these subjects.

But to return to the second leading principle of Shaftesbury's system,—the nature, beauty, and grandeur of moral objects,—we may be allowed to

give our assent to nearly all he has written on this branch of his subject. There is no one, let the imperfections of his moral character be what they may, but who perceives that there are objects of beauty and sublimity in the moral world, as well as in the natural. This has been perceived in all nations and ages. Even in the most savage countries no exception to the general rule is observable. The savage who brings his prisoner to the stake, and inflicts upon him every species of torture and insult which his barbarous ingenuity can suggest, expresses, notwithstanding, his ideas of the sublime and beautiful in character, when he perceives that great as his cruelty is, it is not greater than his victim's heroic firmness of mind and magnanimous contempt of all the torments and mockeries which have been heaped upon him. The same principle operates in more civilized communities. Its extensive influence is spread amongst all classes and descriptions of people; for amongst all, we may daily hear of the fairness, beauty, and loveliness of virtue, and of the ugliness and deformity of vice. When we perceive a man in the more elevated ranks of life devoting all his time and talents to the happiness of his country, despising all honours, riches and power, rather than

sacrifice his own integrity or his country's welfare; who seems to live for no other purpose but to make others feel the benefit and pleasures of life; whose private demeanour is at once courteous and dignified; who will say, when we see a character of this description, that we do not feel that compound of emotion, astonishment, and pleasure which is communicated to us when we contemplate those interesting objects of nature, which produce in our minds the conceptions of grandeur and sublimity? In the more humble walks of life we are deprived of seeing many instances of this elevation and loftiness of character; but even here, though the objects are not generally so bold and commanding, they are softened down to the standard of loveliness and beauty. Let us step into the labourer's cottage, and there behold a family united together by the bonds of mutual love and benevolence; where all tender sympathies are united to soften affliction, and assuage the pangs of grief; where every effort, both of body and mind, is directed to one object—the good of the whole—we will here, let our taste be ever so rude and uncultivated, feel lively sensations of order and beauty, similar to those we feel when we look upon a beautiful landscape, in which luxuriance of foliage, and gentle

elevation of surface, are the two prominent features. And all this seems to be the result of an original and widely established law of our nature, which it is equally as vain to account for, as to deny. Shaftesbury observes that "The mind, which is spectator or auditor of other *minds*, cannot be without its eye and ear; so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound, and scan each sentiment or thought which comes before it. It feels the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable in the affections; and finds a *foul* and *fair*, a *harmonious* and *dissonant*, as really and truly here, as in any musical numbers, or in the outward forms or representations of sensible things. Nor can it withhold its *admiration* and *ecstasy*, its *aversion* and *scorn*, any more in what relates to one than to the other of these subjects. So that to deny the common and natural sense of a *sublime* and *beautiful* in things, will appear an affectation merely to any one who considers duly of this affair.

"Now, as in the sensible kinds of objects, the species or images of bodies, colours, and sounds, are perpetually moving before our eyes, and acting on our senses, even when we sleep; so in the *moral* and *intellectual* kind, the forms and images of things are no less active and incumbent on the

mind, at all seasons, and even when the real objects themselves are absent.

"In those vagrant characters or pictures of manners, which the mind of necessity figures to itself, and carries still about with it, the heart cannot possibly remain neutral; but constantly takes part one way or other. However false or corrupt it be within itself, it finds the difference between one heart and another, one turn of *affection*, one *behaviour*, one *sentiment* and another; and accordingly, in all disinterested cases, must approve in some measure of what is natural and honest, and disapprove of what is dishonest and corrupt.

"Thus the several motives, inclinations, passions, dispositions and consequent carriage and behaviour of creatures in the various parts of life, being in several views or perspectives represented to the mind, which readily discerns the good and ill towards the species or public good; there arises a new trial or exercise of the heart, which must either rightly and soundly affect what is just and right, and disaffect what is contrary; or corruptly affect what is ill, and disaffect what is worthy and good."

A well regulated taste in the fine arts has a considerable effect in increasing our sensibility, and of

making us more susceptible of moral impressions. I think, however, that Shaftesbury has pushed his principles a little too far on this subject, and that experience will not bear him out in all his opinions and conclusions. On the other hand, I cannot agree with his Lordship's opponent, Dr. John Brown, who, in his "Essay on the Characteristics of Shaftesbury," maintains that a fine taste in poetry, painting and music, has no improving effect whatever on our moral nature. Such an opinion is contradicted by the history of all nations.

The next leading principle of morals in his Lordship's system, is that of pure benevolence, or loving virtue for its own sake. He carries this principle to its full extent; holding, that if benevolence is not complete and entire, by being directed to the whole species, it is not benevolence at all. And, when speaking of religion, he says, that where a belief in a Deity, and its influence upon the virtuous principle, proceed from a fear of punishments, or a hope of rewards, both the faith and the influence are corrupt, as they flow not from a pure source, but from selfish considerations. We should love God for his own sake. He here observes, "That if it be *true piety* to love *God* for his own sake, the over-solicitous regard to private good expected

from him, must, of necessity, prove a diminution of piety. For whilst God is beloved only as the cause of private good, he is no otherwise beloved than as any other instrument or means of pleasure by any virtuous creature. Now the more there is of this violent affection towards *private good*, the less room there is for the other sort towards *good itself*, or any good and deserving object, worthy of love and admiration for its own sake; such as God is universally acknowledged, or at least by the generality of civilized or refined worshippers." It is almost needless to say that an author who builds a system of morality on a principle of this kind, will have many opponents, and will fall into numerous contradictions in the course of his reasonings; and even theologians will find it difficult to avoid the same things. To insure success to their labours, they, as well as the moralist, will have to inspire their hearers with a fear of punishment, and a hope of reward, will have to talk of the *utility* of piety and holiness, and the *bad* effects of their opposites, wickedness and impurity. The divine who acts in this manner, and who, at the same time, maintains in all their strictness the principles of Shaftesbury, will find it difficult to make the world at large perceive that his practice and principles perfectly coin-

cide. The same charge of apparent inconsistency at least may be brought against every moral writer who advances the same principles, and observes the same practice; and this has formed the principal ground of attack of all his Lordship's antagonists. He is ever talking of the happiness and utility which arise from virtue, and says, these beneficial effects should induce us to practise it; and he concludes his inquiry into virtue by these striking and remarkable words—"Virtue is the good, and vice the ill of every one." I can say no more on this part of his subject, without in some measure anticipating those reflections which will arise upon a review of the theory of public utility.

Of Shaftesbury's treatise entitled—"*The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody*," it is not necessary to say much. It is a dialogue held by three persons, on all the principal questions of morals, interspersed with occasional discussions on subjects belonging to natural and metaphysical philosophy. The book is written with great power, and is full of close and consecutive reasoning, and declamatory eloquence. It is rather too long for one easily to recollect the chief matters in dispute.

The "Miscellaneous Reflections" which compose nearly the whole of the third volume of the

"*Characteristics,*" form a general collection of desultory remarks on morality, religion, mental philosophy, the fine arts, &c. But it would be out of place to enter into the merits of this treatise; therefore, I shall leave it, with remarking, that it will amply reward the reader for the time bestowed on its perusal.

As a moral writer, Shaftesbury ought to stand very high. He is greatly superior to many who have followed him, such as Clarke and Wollaston, both in matter and in writing. He bears some resemblance to Mandeville in his style; but his system is diametrically opposite to that of the Doctor's. All the moral speculations of his Lordship are characterised by a loftiness of conception, and a high tone of moral feeling. They breathe in every line the language of virtue, and an ardent love of all that is praiseworthy, and of good report amongst men. Mandeville, who seems to have composed his view of morals from an opposition to his Lordship's, observes, and I think very erroneously,—"That the boasted middle-way, and the calm virtues recommended in the '*Characteristics,*' are good for nothing but to breed drones, and might qualify a man for the stupid enjoyments of a monastic life, or at best, a country justice of peace;

but they would never fit him for labour and assiduity, or stir him up to great achievements and perilous undertakings. Man's natural love of ease and idleness, and proneness to indulge his sensual pleasures and inclinations, can only be subdued by passions of greater violence."

I think, the writings of his Lordship, where carefully read and examined, are calculated to produce effects, upon the heart and conduct, the very reverse of what is here ascribed to them.

It is from his "Inquiry into the nature of virtue and merit," that we find what his speculative opinions on morals really were; and there is nothing here that can give the slightest offence to the most fastidious theologian or to the most sincere lover of virtue and propriety. Those who endeavour to lessen his reputation on account of religious opinion, will do well to remember that his theory of morals is precisely the same as that which has been brought forward more conspicuously in later times, from a conception of its being more congenial in principle to the Christian religion. This fact can be attested by an appeal to theological works of extensive popularity and high

* Fable of the Bees, vol. i. 382.

credit. The moral theory of Dr. Jonathan Edwards, and that of his grandson Dr. Dwight, which they have incorporated in their respective systems of theology, are exactly the same in *principle*, and in many places in their writings, expressed in the same language as that of Shaftesbury's. Dr. Edwards says that a man of real virtue "is a being having a heart united and benevolently *disposed* to being in general;" a position which, if it have any meaning in it at all, must be considered tantamount to Shaftesbury's principle, that benevolence —pure benevolence, stripped of every particle of selfishness—must be the foundation of Christian morality. Dr. Dwight mentions the same doctrine; he says, "benevolence is virtue, selfishness is sin; benevolence aims to promote happiness in all beings capable of happiness; selfishness is the promotion of the private separate happiness *of one*; subordinating to it that *of all others*, and opposing that of all others, whenever it is considered as inconsistent with that of *one's self*. *Benevolence, therefore, directs the whole active power or energy of the mind in which it exists, to the production of the most extensive happiness.* This is what I intend by the *utility of virtue*, and that in which, as it appears to my own view, all its excellence is

found." * Every reader will perceive the striking coincidence between the moral views of these distinguished theologians, and those of Shaftesbury.

The style of the "Characteristics" has been the subject of much criticism amongst the learned. By one set of critics it has been much applauded, and by another set, has been as severely censured. Dr. Campbell, in his "Philosophy of Rhetoric," accuses his lordship of affectation in his writing. I think his moral essays are distinguished by perspicuity and a lively elegance. In his other works he is by no means so clear and easy in his style.

* Dwight's System of Theology, vol. iii. 335.

CHAPTER XII.

FABLE OF THE BEES.

DR. MANDEVILLE.

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE was born about 1670, in Holland, where he studied physic, and obtained the degree of Doctor in that faculty. He afterwards came over into England, and published several works, which, though not destitute of ingenuity and talent, were not considered likely to promote either private or public virtue and happiness. In 1709 he published his "Virgin Unmasked, or, a Dialogue between an old maiden Aunt and her Niece, upon Love, Marriage," &c.—a book of a very questionable tendency. In 1711 came out his "Treatise of the Hypochondriac and Hysteric Passions, vulgarly called the Hypo in Men, and the Vapours in Women." This work is comprised in three dialogues, and it is said to be of a very amus-

ing character, and to contain many excellent remarks on the art of physic and on the modern practice of physicians and apothecaries, amongst whom, it is conjectured, he was held in no great degree of estimation. In 1714 he published a poem, "The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turned honest," on which he afterwards remarks; which constitute the work on which the following critical remarks are made. This publication of Mandeville's was presented the same year by the grand jury of Middlesex, and severely animadverted upon in a "Letter to the Right Honourable Lord C." printed in the London Journal of the 27th July 1723. The author wrote a vindication of his book from these imputations, which were on every side thrown upon it, which was published in the same journal in the month of August following. His book, however, was attacked in various publications; but to the great mass of these criticisms he made no formal answer until 1728, when he published in another volume a second part of the "Fable of the Bees," in order to illustrate more clearly and fully the scheme of the first. In 1720 he published a work called "Free Thoughts on Religion;" and in a few years after, another, under the title of "An Inquiry into the Origin of Honour, and Usefulness of Christ-

ianity in War," a work which is pronounced to abound with whimsical and paradoxical opinions.

Dr. Mandeville died on January 21, 1733, in the sixty-third year of his age.—Some of his biographers affirm that he was patronized by the first Earl of Macclesfield, at whose table he was a frequent guest, where he had an unlimited licence to indulge his wit as well as his appetite. He lived for a considerable period of his life in obscure lodgings in London, and never had an extensive practice as a medical man. Besides the writings already mentioned, which came spontaneously from his pen, we are told by Sir John Hawkins that he sometimes employed his talents for hire, and, in particular, wrote letters in the "London Journal" in favour of spirituous liquors, for which he was paid by the distillers. Sir John adds, that "he was said to be coarse and overbearing in his manners, where he durst be so, yet a great flatterer of some vulgar Dutch merchants who allowed him a pension."

The "Fable of the Bees," as has already been noticed, was violently attacked by several writers; but, besides these, Dr. Fiddes wrote a work against Mandeville, entitled, "General Treatise of Morality, formed upon the Principles of Natural Religion," printed in 1724;—Mr. John Dennis sent

forth his piece called "Vice and Luxury public Mischiefs;"—Mr. William Law's book attracted notice, called "Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees;"—Mr. Bluet, in his "Enquiry whether the general practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage, of a People? in which the pleas offered by the Author of the Fable of the Bees, for the usefulness of Vice and Roguery, are considered; with some Thoughts concerning a toleration of public Stews," printed in 1725;—Mr. Hutcheson, in his "Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue," in several papers published at Dublin, and reprinted in the first volume of Hibernici's Letters. Mandeville's notions of morality were also animadverted upon by Bishop Berkeley, in his "Minute Philosopher."

The "*Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*," is a work which evidently shows the author was a man of great penetration, and one who had studied human nature with a keen and discriminating eye. He has developed his system of morals with much clearness and precision; and his illustrations are remarkably striking and well selected, and are detailed in language simple and unaf-

fected. His system, however, has been little read or studied; and almost all writers on morals who have honoured him with a perusal have denounced him as a satirist, and as an open and avowed patron of immorality and licentiousness. How far this censure is just, will be in some measure our business to inquire.

The Doctor's ethical system may, for the sake of clearness, be divided into two parts; namely, his account of the origin of moral virtue, and his endeavours to show that the private vices of individuals tend to the public welfare.

His theory of moral virtue is this: All animals have an irresistible propensity to follow the bent of their own inclinations, and seem totally regardless of the good or injury they may bring upon others of their kind by the unbounded indulgence of their passions. Man, in a state of nature, is, in like manner, solicitous only about his own gratification; and however force may soften the more rude features of his character, force alone will be found inadequate to raise him to that state of moral and political improvement of which his nature seems susceptible.

Politicians and lawgivers, therefore, seeing how necessary it was that the passions of men should be circumscribed within certain limits, both for the

comfort of himself and for the very existence and well-being of society, applied themselves to study the nature of the being they were so desirous of civilizing, and during their inquiries found him possessed of a vastly superior portion of pride compared to other animals, and that the most effectual way to induce him to forego the unlimited indulgence of his appetites, and make him labour more zealously for the public welfare than for his own immediate amusement, was, by operating upon this principle of pride. Accordingly, these politicians lavished unbounded praises upon his sagacity and the comprehensiveness of his understanding; and having, in some measure, effected an entrance into his heart by this kind of flattery, they began to teach him the notions of honour and shame, taking care at all times to represent the former as the highest good, and the latter as the greatest evil, which could befal him. These early teachers commenced also to instil into the mind of man, how much it was beneath the dignity of such a noble being as he was to give way to those natural inclinations and passions which he had in common with other brute animals, and how his nature would gain proportionate elevation above all other animals by learning to prefer distant good to present indulgence. The spirit of

emulation being now firmly rooted, the labour of civilization, self-denial, and moral culture, became general and comparatively easy. The virtues of fortitude, courage, and magnanimity became prevalent by the introduction of pompous triumphs and magnificent monuments and arches, the only effectual means of exciting and keeping alive the heroism and valour of a nation. In fine, the more we consider human nature, and the complicated state of society, the more we will be convinced that the moral virtues did not owe their origin to any general sense or principle, or to any heathenish worship. or idolatrous superstition, but were the "*political offspring which flattery begat upon pride.*"

This brief outline of Mandeville's notions respecting the origin of virtue will be found in that chapter, in the first volume of his works, entitled "*An Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue.*"

"As in all animals that are not too imperfect to discover pride, we find that the finest and such as are the most beautiful and valuable of their kind have generally the greatest share of it; so in man, the most perfect of animals, it is so inseparable from his very essence, (how cunningly soever some may learn to hide or disguise it,) that without it the compound he is made of would want one of the

chiefest ingredients; which, if we consider, it is hardly to be doubted but lessons and remonstrances, so skilfully adapted to the good opinion man has of himself, as those I have mentioned, must, if scattered amongst a multitude, not only gain the assent of most of them as to the speculative part, but likewise induce several, especially the fiercest, most resolute, and best among them, to endure a thousand inconveniencies, and undergo as many hardships, that they may have the pleasure of counting themselves men of the second class, and consequently appropriating to themselves all the excellencies they have heard of it.

"From what has been said, we ought to expect, in the first place, that the heroes who took such extraordinary pains to master some of their natural appetites, and preferred the good of others to any visible interest of their own, would not recede an inch from the fine notions they had received concerning the dignity of rational creatures; and having ever the authority of the government on their side, with all imaginable vigour assert the esteem that was due to those of the second class, as well as their superiority over the rest of their kind. In the second, that those who wanted a sufficient stock of either pride or resolution to buoy them up in mor-

tifying of what was dearest to them, and followed the sensual dictates of their nature, would not be ashamed of confessing themselves to be those despicable wretches that belonged to the inferior class, and were generally reckoned to be so little removed from brutes; and that, therefore, in their own defence, they would say as others did, and, hiding their own imperfections as well as they could, cry up self-denial and public-spiritedness as much as any: For it is highly probable that some of them, convinced by the real proofs of fortitude and self-conquest they had seen, would admire in others what they found wanting in themselves; others would be afraid of the resolution and prowess of those of the second class, and that all of them would be kept in awe by the power of their rulers; wherefore it is reasonable to think that none of them (whatever they thought in themselves) would dare openly contradict what by every body else was thought criminal to doubt of.

"This was (or might have been) the manner after which savage man was broke; from whence it is evident, that the first rudiments of morality, broached by skilful politicians, to render men useful to each other, as well as tractable, were chiefly contrived that the ambitious might reap the same

benefit from, and govern vast numbers of them with the greater ease and security. This foundation of politics being once laid, it is impossible that man should long remain uncivilized; for even those who only strove to gratify their appetites, being continually crossed by others of the same stamp, could not but observe, that, whenever they checked their inclinations, or but followed them with more circumspection, they avoided a world of troubles, and often escaped many of the calamities that generally attended the too eager pursuit after pleasure."

It may be observed on this part of Mandeville's system, that, from all the accounts which have come down to us respecting the views and actions of the early civilizers of mankind, or, as he calls them, politicians and lawgivers, it does not appear that they were actuated by such motives as he has ascribed to them. But, supposing that they had been influenced by such desires for producing moral and political improvement, as he asserts, still we cannot help asking how it came to pass that they, being only men themselves, became the exclusive possessors of the knowledge of all those moral principles and feelings, which they were so wishful to make the rest of mankind acquainted with, at the expense of so much time and trouble? Were those lawgivers

alone capable of feeling the pleasures, and of knowing the nature, of benevolence, gratitude, and humanity? or were they the only persons who were permitted, in this universal chaos of vice, to feel the ties of blood and the force of parental affection? Should even these questions receive an affirmative answer, the Doctor's theory is by no means placed in a more imposing point of view; for if these early teachers of mankind engrossed all moral and political knowledge, this incontrovertibly proves that that knowledge must have had a previous existence, and had not been derived from the superior sagacity of the moralist or the intrigues of the politician.

If we cast a glance over human society, we will instantly perceive some general and universal principles of morals, some actions which all mankind feel a pleasurable or painful emotion in performing, or in seeing them performed by others, irrespective of their intellectual acquirements, religion, or condition of life. If this had not been the case,—if mankind, in some places and ages, had been so constituted as to feel painful emotions and consequences from actions which others found productive of pleasure and of benefit, there never would have been any system of morals, nor could general plans of

government or codes of laws ever have been devised. Every thing of a moral and political nature would have been local in its existence and partial in its operation; and the speculations and reasonings of men on human nature in general, would necessarily have been circumscribed within very narrow limits indeed.

Those moral philosophers, therefore, who deny that there are any general moral principles at all,—who assert that all our actions are merely the result of habits engendered by various systems of government and religion, appear to me to frame to themselves a very erroneous view of the matter. Man is evidently, I think, a being capable, from his very nature, of feeling moral impressions, and of performing those actions from which these impressions result. If this be not the case,—if every thing is to be ascribed to instruction and nothing to nature,—then it naturally follows, that, by a certain and particular system of education, we could obliterate every portion of moral susceptibility from the human heart, and remove man, or whole bodies of men, as far from all moral obligations as we suppose devils and fiends to be removed. But is it possible to carry such a plan of moral—or rather, I

should say, of immoral—instruction into effect as this inference supposes?

But, leaving this part of the Doctor's system, let us look at the other—his endeavours to show that our vicious qualifications and practices are a great support to civil society. On this branch of his subject he has devoted a considerable portion of the contents of his two volumes, and has taken every means to shelter his logical positions by well-chosen and numerous illustrations. To give a concise and adequate conception of this part of his theory, it will be necessary to give two or three quotations from his "*Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turned Honest,*" and the prose notes which accompany and illustrate it.

"A spacious hive, well stack't with bees,
That liv'd in luxury and ease,
And yet as fam'd for laws and arms,
As yielding large and early swarms,
Was counted the great nursery
Of sciences and industry.
No bees had better government,
More fickleness, and less content;
They were not slaves to tyranny,
Nor rul'd by wild democracy;
But kings, that could not wrong, because
Their power was circumscrib'd by laws—
* * * * * *

Vast numbers throng'd the fruitful hive,
Yet those vast numbers made 'em thrive;
Millions endeavouring to supply
Each other's lust and vanity;
Whilst other millions were employ'd
To see their handyworks destroy'd.
They furnish'd half the universe,
Yet had more work than labourers.
Some with vast stocks, and little pains,
Jump'd into business of great gains;
And some were damn'd to scythes and spades,
And all those hard laborious trades,
Where willing wretches daily sweat,
And wear out strength and limbs to eat;
(*A*) Whilst others follow'd mysteries,
To which few folks bind 'prentices;
That want no stock, but that of brass,
And may set up without a cross;
As sharpers, parasites, pimps, players,
Pickpockets, coiners, quack, soothsayers,
And all those that in enmity,
With downright working, cunningly
Convert to their own use the labour
Of their good natur'd heedless neighbour.
(*B*) But these were knaves, but bar the name,
The grave industrious were the same;
All trades and places knew some cheat,
No calling was without deceit."
" The lawyers, of whose art the basis
Was raising feuds and splitting cases,
Opposed all registers, that cheats
Might make more work with dipt estates,

As wer't unlawful that one's own
Without a lawsuit should be known.
They kept off hearings wilfully,
To finger the refreshing fee;
And to defend a wicked cause,
Examin'd and survey'd the laws,
As burglars shops and houses do,
To find out where they'd best break through."

Mandeville goes on in this manner amongst the different orders and trades of the community, such as physicians, priests, soldiers, tradesmen, kings, and their prime ministers, with a view to show that vice, avarice, pride, &c. are the great stimulants to exertions of every kind. Then follows his notes on the Poem, of which the following is a specimen.

(*B*) "*These were called knaves, but bar the name,*
The grave industrious were the same."

"This, I confess, is but a very indifferent compliment to the trading part of the people. But if the word *knave* may be understood in its full latitude, and comprehend every body that is not sincerely honest, and does to others what he would dislike to have done to himself, I don't question but I shall make good the charge. To pass by the innumerable artifices by which buyers and sellers

outwit one another, that are daily allowed of and practised amongst the fairest *dealers*: Show me the tradesman that has always discovered the defects of his goods to those that cheapened them; nay, where will you find one that has not at one time or other industriously concealed them, to the detriment of the *buyer?* Where is the merchant that has never against his conscience extolled his wares beyond their worth, to make them go off the better?

"*Decio*, a man of great figure, that had large commissions for sugar from several parts beyond sea, treats about a considerable quantity with *Alcander*, an eminent *West India* merchant; both understood the market very well, but could not agree: *Decio* was a man of substance, and thought nobody ought to buy cheaper than himself; *Alcander* was the same, and not wanting money, stood for his price. Whilst they were driving their bargain at a tavern near the exchange, *Alcander's* man brought his master a letter from the *West Indies*, that informed him of a much greater quantity of sugars coming for England than was expected. *Alcander* now wished for nothing more than to sell at *Decio's* price before the news was public; but being a cunning fox, and that he might not seem too precipitant, nor yet lose his customer, he

drops the discourse they were upon, and putting on a jovial humour, commends the agreeableness of the weather, from whence falling upon the delight he took in his gardens, invites *Decio* to go along with him to his country house, that was not above twelve miles from London. It was in the month of May, and as it happened, upon a Saturday in the afternoon. *Decio*, who was a single man, and would have no business in town before Tuesday, accepts of the other's civility, and away they go in *Alcander's* coach. *Decio* was splendidly entertained that night and the following day; the Monday morning, to get himself an appetite, he goes to take the air upon a pad of *Alcander's*, and coming back meets with a gentleman of his acquaintance who tells him news was come that night before, that the Barbadoes fleet was destroyed by a storm, and adds, that before he was come out, it had been confirmed at Lloyd's Coffee-House, where it was thought sugars would rise 25 per cent. by change time. *Decio* returns to his friend, and immediately resumes the discourse they had broken off at the tavern; *Alcander*, who thinking himself sure of his *chap*, did not design to have moved it till after dinner, was very glad to see himself so happily prevented; but how desirous soever he was to sell,

the other was yet more eager to buy; yet both of them afraid of one another, for a considerable time counterfeited all the indifference imaginable; till at last *Decio*, fired with what he had heard, thought delays dangerous, and throwing a *guinea* upon the table struck the bargain at *Alcander's* price. The next day they went to London; the news proved true, and *Decio* got five hundred pounds by his sugars. *Alcander*, whilst he had strove to overreach the other, was paid in his own coin; yet all this is called fair dealing; but I am sure that neither of them would have desired to be done by as they did to each other."

Our Author concludes the "*Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turned honest,*" with a *moral*, in which he has condensed into a small compass, the principles which he advocates and unfolds throughout the Poem.

"Then leave complaints, fools only strive
To make a great, an honest hive.
T' enjoy the world's conveniences,
Be fam'd in war, yet live in ease,
Without great vices, is a vain
Eutopia seated in the brain;
Fraud, luxury, and pride must live,
Whilst we the benefits receive;
Hunger's a dreadful plague, no doubt,
Yet who digests or thrives without?

Do we not owe the growth of wine
To the dry, shabby, crooked vine?
Which, whilst its shoots neglected stood,
Choked other plants, and run to wood;
But blest us with its noble fruit,
As soon as it was ty'd and cut;
So vice is beneficial found,
When it's by justice lopt and bound.
Nay, where the people would be great,
As necessary to the state,
As hunger is to make 'em eat.
Bare virtue cannot make nations live,
In splendour—they that would revive
A golden age, must be as free
For acrons as for honesty."

There is scarcely any system of morals so false but what may be found mixed up in it some portion of truth. Human nature is composed of such multifarious and opposite ingredients, and may be viewed under such a seemingly endless variety of aspects, that ingenuity is never at a loss to find arguments, and to bring forward facts, to support and strengthen any preconceived theory. Accordingly we find that Mandeville has, with considerable address, availed himself of these contradictory appearances of human conduct, and has made the most of every moral fact which he thought capable of adding solidity to his system; but he has also been

equally studious to keep out of view every suggestion which might tend to throw a doubt over his opinions. He does not seem to view human nature with the comparatively uninterested coolness of a philosopher, who strives on all occasions to give every moral fact, and every general sentiment and feeling their due share of weight and importance; and encumbers himself with no theory save that which may naturally suggest itself from a careful and patient examination of the phenomena of man's moral constitution. The Doctor shows all the zeal and fervour of a theoretical partizan, determined in the outset that if his hypothesis should not square with his facts, he will make his facts square with his hypothesis. It is not intended by this to imply that he has sacrificed a greater portion of truth to his theory than some other writers have done; but he has sacrificed a good deal, and this must always be looked upon as a great blemish in his, as well as in every other person's moral writings.

There is something quite astounding in the bare title of Mandeville's book—"The Fable of the Bees, or *Private Vices, Public Benefits.*" That vice in private persons may sometimes be productive of benefit to other private individuals, may be

true enough, but that a nation in its collective capacity can be rendered more virtuous, more powerful, or more happy by the generally immoral conduct of its members, is a position manifestly absurd. A man goes on the highway, and violently robs his neighbour of a thousand pounds; and the robber spends his money in the purchase of goods of various kinds amongst respectable tradesmen; and it may here, in a qualified sense, be said that good is performed by the fruits of private iniquity; but that the nation itself should be the better of an open and daring violation of its laws, and a system of private plunder and confiscation, cannot be, by any refined species of sophistry, maintained for a single moment. On the other hand, it may be admitted, without coming under the charge of an unqualified acquiescence in Mandeville's opinion, that there is more truth in his proposition, that the private vices of individuals tend in some cases to the honour and glory of a nation, than in his account of the origin of moral virtue; and more than has generally been admitted by those who have descanted on his writings. It will appear evident to every observer of human nature, that actions which are called vicious, form, in some cases, the foundation of what are termed the greatness, honour and glory

of society. There is nothing, for example, which confers a more solid and lasting reputation upon a country than the just and unswerving integrity of its judges; and yet it is clear that the office of judge, which is thought so necessary, and is held in such high repute amongst us, is created and upheld solely by the lowest species of vice practised amongst mankind. Here the effect is good, and the cause bad; and the one follows the other as closely and consecutively as any two things in nature do. Few, I think, will feel inclined to prove the converse of this, and endeavour to show that if the thievish and turbulent part of society were entirely to abstain from committing violence on the persons and properties of the quiet and honest, we would still have judges clothed in all the glory and honour in which they now appear.

It seems to me that Mandeville has been too severely censured for the leading principle of this part of his system, whereas it is not the principle itself but his illustrations of it, which lie so open to animadversion and reproof. The principle is, that evil is sometimes productive of good. Now, has not this principle, both openly and in various shapes and disguises, been recognised by many able philosophers and pious divines? It would be easy

to mention a hundred volumes, both in philosophy and divinity, where the same doctrine is attempted to be established. There are no two books which appear more dissimilar, both in matter and in manner, than the "*Fable of the Bees*," and Pope's "*Essay on Man*;" the former deemed disreputable, and the latter generally applauded; yet the "*Essay on Man*" is nothing but *Mandevillism* stripped of its gross and familiar illustrations, and clothed in the gorgeous and imposing drapery of harmonious numbers and poetical embellishment.

> "All nature is but art unknown to thee;
> All chance direction which thou can's't not see;
> All discord harmony not understood;
> *All partial evil, universal good,*
> And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> *One truth is clear, whatever is is right.*"

That good arises in many cases out of evil is a proposition maintained by almost all moralists; and so well is it supported by facts and observation, that it has grown into a common and trite remark, even amongst those who do not trouble themselves with much abstract thinking. The physical evils we endure are productive of great benefit to us in strengthening and improving our courage and fortitude, and by raising and exalting our whole moral character. And there can be no doubt but that

disease, war, pestilence, and many other evils, which are the objects of constant and general lamentation, become the source of many virtues, and tend to give a more vigorous tone to the character, and to enlarge our experience and judgment to a greater degree, than if we were strangers to trouble, and lived in a state of uninterrupted peace and luxurious enjoyment. Besides, it may be mentioned, that moral evil is productive of good to individuals and to society at large in many different ways. The wicked and wayward conduct of some persons supply us with many useful lessons by way of example and instruction, and point out the danger to both our moral and physical constitutions, from impure and vicious practices. Our moral qualities are excited into action, and are improved and invigorated by evils which fall to the lot of others, or which we are called upon ourselves to endure.

It may also be observed, that we may perceive something in those laws which exist for the government and preservation of every class of beings in the extensive range of animated nature, that many furnish us with additional proofs, that the principle, that good comes sometimes out of evil, is not exclusively applicable to the physical and moral condition of man. The carnage, the destruc-

tion, the ferocity, the cruelty, and the pain and misery which are inflicted upon many creatures, in being made to serve as food for others, and the astonishing acts of cunning and sagacity which this work of havoc creates, bear a striking analogy to the general workings of evil amongst ourselves; and are calculated, if we possess a proper frame of spirit, to awaken many elevated conceptions of the provident care, which the Maker and Preserver of the universe exercises over his numerous and intelligent offspring.

Those moral speculations, therefore, which endeavour to show that vice, (or evil) forms a part of the economy of the universe, and administers in some unperceived manner to the general good of mankind, are certainly pardonable, if not philosophical, as they do not seem to take their rise from any bad or immoral motive. On the contrary, such opinions will generally be found associated with the best regulated feelings, and with the most devout piety. These opinions are purely places of speculative refuge where inquisitive men find shelter from the manifold perplexities and absurdities which every way beset them in their inquiries into the nature and constitution of things. When those who believe in the existence of an all-powerful,

wise, and good Being, see the numerous evils which flesh is heir to, they are apt to become confounded; and feeling a reluctance to call the wisdom and goodness of Omnipotence in question, or to enter into the puzzling and unsatisfactory controversies about the origin of evil, are induced to think that evil may not be evil, and that vice may be a necessary and wholesome ingredient in the moral economy of the world. Whether this view of things be just or salutary, is not incumbent in me to inquire here. But I shall simply state in passing, that there seems to be one inference from the principle here alluded to, which cannot fail to be troublesome to its supporters; namely, if vice be necessary to the good of the world, then there can in reality be no such thing as vice at all, and that all our moral distinctions are at bottom nothing but phantasms and vagaries of the brain.

The first volume of the "Fable of the Bees" contains also an essay on *Charity* and *Charity Schools*, in which the author endeavours to show that a great deal of what goes under the general denomination of charity, with the world at large, is nothing but selfishness, pride, and vanity. He says, "when sores are very bare, or seem otherwise afflicting in an extraordinary manner, and the beg-

gar can bear to have them exposed to the cold air, it is very shocking to some people; 'tis a shame they cry, such sights should be suffered; the main reason is, it touches their pity feelingly, and at the same time they are resolved, either because they are covetous, or count it an idle expense, to give nothing, which makes them more uneasy, they turn their eyes, and where the cries are dismal, some would willingly stop their ears if they were not ashamed. What they can do is to mend their pace, and be very angry in their hearts that beggars should be about the streets. But it is with pity as it is with fear, the more we are conversant with objects that excite either passion, the less we are disturbed by them, and those to whom all these scenes and tones are by custom made familiar, they make little impression upon. The only thing the industrious beggar has left to conquer these fortified hearts, if he can walk either with or without crutches, is to follow close and with uninterrupted noise, teaze and importune them to buy their peace. Thus thousands give money to beggars from the same motive as they pay their corn-cutter, to walk easy; and many a half-penny is given to impudent and designedly persecuting rascals, whom, if it could be done handsomely, a man would cane with much more satisfac-

tion. Yet all this is by the courtesy of the country called charity."

The second volume of Mandeville's work is composed of six dialogues between *Horatio*, *Cleomenes* and *Fulvia*, on topics connected with human nature, and tending in their general scope, to establish his peculiar views on morals. This is the least objectionable part of his work; inasmuch as it contains less grossness and vulgarity than what are to be found in the first volume. But the second is duller and more tedious. Mandeville has been accused of a deliberate design to promote vicious and immoral conduct, and of wishing to confound all our notions of right and wrong. That his principles are liable to have inferences of an unfriendly nature drawn from them, must be granted; but he does not in my opinion seem to have been actuated by the improper motives which have generally been ascribed to him. It will only be an act of fairness to hear what he has to offer on this head himself. He says in his usually quaint and humorous manner, "The censorious that never saw the '*Grumbling Hive*,' will tell me, that whatever I may talk of the Fable, it not taking up a tenth part of the book, was only contrived to introduce the *remarks*; that instead of clearing up the doubtful or obscure places, I have

only pitched upon such as I had a mind to expatiate upon; and that far from striving to extenuate the errors committed before, I have made bad worse, and shown myself a more barefaced champion for vice in the rambling digressions, than I had done in the Fable itself.

"I shall spend no time in answering these accusations: where men are prejudiced, the best apologies are lost; and I know that those who think it criminal to suppose a necessity of vice in any case whatever, will never be reconciled to any part of the performance; but if this be thoroughly examined, all the offence it can give must result from the wrong inferences that may perhaps be drawn from it, and which I desire nobody to make. When I assert that vices are inseparable from great and potent societies, and that it is impossible their wealth and grandeur should subsist without, I do not say that the particular members of them who are guilty of any kind should not be continually reproved, or not be punished for them when they grow into crimes.

"There are, I believe, few people in London of those that are at any time forced to go a-foot, but what could wish the streets much cleaner than generally they are; whilst they regard nothing but

their own clothes and private convenience; but when once they come to consider, that what offends them is the result of the plenty, great traffic, and opulence of that mighty city; if they have any concern in its welfare, they will hardly ever wish to see the streets of it less dirty. For if we mind the materials of all sorts that must supply such an indefinite number of trades and handicrafts as are always going forward, the vast quantity of victuals, drink and fuel, that are daily consumed in it, and the waste and superfluities that must be produced from them; the multitude of horses and other cattle that are always daubing the streets, the carts, coaches, and more heavy carriages that are perpetually wearing and breaking the pavement of them; and above all, the numerous swarms of people that are continually harassing and trampling through every part of it. If, I say, we mind all these, we will find that every moment must produce new filth; and considering how far distant the great streets are from the river side, what cost and care soever be bestowed to remove the nastiness almost as fast as it is made, it is impossible London should be more cleanly before it is less flourishing. Now, would I ask, if a good citizen, in consideration of what has been said, might not

assert, that dirty streets are a necessary evil inseparable from the felicity of London, without being the least hindrance to the cleaning of shoes, or sweepings of streets, and consequently without any prejudice either to the *blackguard* or the *scavengers?*

"But if, without any regard to the interests or happiness of the city, the question was put, what place I thought most pleasant to walk in? Nobody can doubt, but before the stinking streets of London I would esteem a fragrant garden or a shady grove in the country. In the same manner, if, laying aside all worldly greatness and vain glory, I should be asked where I thought it was most probable that men might enjoy true happiness, I would prefer a small peaceable society, in which men, neither envied nor esteemed by neighbours, should be contented to live upon the natural product of the spot they inhabit, to a vast multitude abounding in wealth and power, that should always be conquering others by their arms abroad, and debauching them by foreign luxury at home."

In conclusion, it may be observed, that the "*Fable of the Bees*" is a work which seems more calculated to establish the ingenuity of its author, than to advance the interests of moral science.

There is throughout the whole of his works a strong and manifest disposition to satire and ridicule, which seems extremely out of place in a treatise on morals, and which is at all times unbecoming the calm unruffled dignity of a philosopher. Mandeville may be considered in morals, what his countryman *Teniers* was in painting, excellent in all that was whimsical, droll and satirical. Amidst all the odd and eccentric positions and attitudes in which the author of the "*Grumbling Hive*" has placed human nature, we nevertheless must always acknowledge that he preserves with great fidelity the more obvious and striking features and modes of expression in man's moral countenance; and though the artist has exhibited him as an object of laughter and ridicule, we must still give our mead of praise to the expert caricaturist. His illustrations, though very striking, are nevertheless very frequently vulgar and indecent, and cannot fail to excite unpleasant feelings in any tolerably well regulated mind. We rise from the perusal of his book with no accession of strength to our moral resolutions, no increased warmth of moral feeling, nor any lofty conceptions of the dignity of virtue; but, on the contrary, every thing appears cold and

selfish, and we feel a sensible diminution of reverence for the importance of moral science, by the whimsical humour and facetious satire of the author.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOLINGBROKE AND POPE.

MORAL WORKS.

BOLINGBROKE.

Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, was descended from an ancient and noble family, and was born in the year 1672. He had a regular and liberal education; and by the time he left the university, was considered as a person of uncommon attainments; but with great parts, he had, as it sometimes happens, great passions, and these hurried him into many follies and indiscretions. Contrary to the inclinations of his family, he cultivated Tory connexions; and gained such an influence in the House of Commons, that in 1704, he was appointed secretary of war and of the marines. He was closely united in all political measures with Mr. Harley; when, therefore, that gentleman was removed from the seals in 1707, Mr. St. John resign-

ed his employment; and in 1710, when Mr. Harley was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, the post of Secretary of State was given to Mr. St. John. In 1712 he was created Viscount Bolingbroke. But being overlooked in the bestowal of vacant ribbons of the order of the garter, he resented the affront, renounced the friendship of Harley, then Earl of Oxford, and made his court to the Whigs. He lost, however, the confidence of his new connexions, and had to repair to the continent, to avoid the consequences of a charge of high treason which was brought against him relating to the treaty of Utrecht. He entered into the Pretender's service, but here again ill fortune followed him, for his new patrons and he did not long keep upon an amicable footing. These disappointments in political affairs contributed greatly to excite a spirit of contemplation, to which we owe his "*Reflections upon Exile.*" He wrote also many political pieces against the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. He repaired to France a second time, and composed his letters on the study and use of history, for the use of Lord Cornbury, to whom they are addressed. Upon the death of his father, he settled at Batersea, the ancient seat of his family, where he passed the remainder of his days in philosophical repose and dig-

nity. He died in 1751, and left the care and benefit of his MSS. to Mr. Mallet, who published them, together with his former printed works, in five vols. 4to.; they are also printed in 8vo.

POPE.

ALEXANDER POPE was born in London in 1688, and was descended from a good family of that name, in Oxfordshire. His father, a man of simplicity of manners, and of spotless integrity, was a merchant of London, who, upon the Revolution, quitted trade, and converted his effects into money, amounting to near L.10,000, with which he retired into the country; and died in 1717, at the age of seventy-five.

Pope owed the first elements of his education to his aunt, who learned him to read; and he taught himself the art of writing, by copying printed books, the characters of which he imitated to great perfection. He was afterwards placed under the care of a catholic clergyman, who instructed him in Latin and Greek, and he seems to have finished his education, by remaining two or three years at private schools, one at Twyford, near Winchester, and the other at Hyde Park Corner.

The first publication of Mr. Pope's was an Ode on Solitude, sent from the press when he was only twelve years of age; and two years afterwards he translated Statius's Thebais, and wrote a copy of verses on Silence, in imitation of the Earl of Rochester's poem on Nothing; thus verifying the truth of his own remarks, that

"He lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came."

The next publication of importance was his *Essay on Criticism*, and his *Rape of the Lock* followed soon after. These two works stamped his reputation as an author of no common genius and acquirements. His translations of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, brought him, besides fame, as much money as made him independent through life. His Epistles from Abelard and Eloisa, his Dunciad, his Essay on Man, and his Moral Epistles, complete his other principal publications. He died in 1744, in the 56th year of his age.

It will be necessary, before entering upon an examination of the moral writings of these two distinguished authors, to offer a few reasons, first, why they are here classed together; and, secondly, what

right either of them has to the title of a theoretical moralist.

First, They are here joined together, from the close similarity of their views on moral subjects. It has long been an opinion amongst some men of literary distinction, that Bolingbroke was the original writer of the "*Essay on Man*," and that Pope was only the versifier of it. His Lordship says, in some parts of his works, that his Moral Speculations were written by him at Mr. Pope's desire. In another passage, he seems to have anticipated the versification of his philosophy; for he says to Pope, "Into these subtile and perplexed disquisitions, (meaning those of necessity and free-will,) I have no desire to enter into them. *I write to you, and for you;* and you would think yourself little obliged to me if I took the pains of explaining in *prose* what you would not think it necessary to explain in *verse*, and in the character of a *poetical philosopher* who may deal in generalities." Whether Bolingbroke sent a treatise under the denomination of an "Essay on Man," requesting Pope expressly to turn it into verse, or Pope drew up the Essay of his own accord, from the philosophical speculations with which Bolingbroke was well known to have been in the constant habit of furnishing him, along with

other reflections of a religious nature, it is impossible to determine with precision; the latter circumstance seems the more probable of the two. One thing, however, is certain; that these two celebrated individuals thought and spoke alike on all matters connected with the moral nature of man; their ethical systems are precisely one and the same in their general principles and minute dependencies. In the absence of all direct evidence about who was the original framer of the "Essay on Man," we are compelled, in perusing the prose writings of the one and the verses of the other, to come to this conclusion, that either Pope must have learned his moral philosophy from Bolingbroke, or Bolingbroke must have learned his from Pope.

As the subject may appear interesting to some readers, I shall here give two or three quotations from Lord Bolingbroke's philosophical works, which were published in 1754, in five volumes, by Mr. Mallet; and shall follow up these quotations by an equal number of passages from the "Essay on Man," which seem to have a similar import. To follow out this plan to its full extent, so as to do complete justice to the subject, is impossible, without extending these remarks to an unwarrantable length. Where his Lordship's arguments are so bulky as to

prevent quotation, I will endeavour to condense his language, and where passages are to be found of sufficient brevity, will insert them in his own words.

In investigating the merits of the moral systems of Cudworth, Clarke, and Wollaston, his Lordship considered that these authors were endeavouring to place virtue or morality on a too refined, metaphysical, and insecure foundation. According to his conception of their opinions, their fitnesses and unfitnesses, their agreements and disagreements, their conformities to and deviations from the nature of things, were phrases which, in one sense, would bear an intelligible and harmless interpretation enough; but when made to stand for things considered in their natures eternal and immutable, they become not only objectionable but absurd. To consider moral objects in their natures as eternal, immutable, independent essences, like as many talk of the objects of mathematical science, something in fact entirely unconnected with the nature and will of the supreme Being, savoured so strongly of scholastic refinement, that the doctrine might be safely abandoned as being above our comprehension. Such philosophy aims at nothing short of diving into God's nature; into the depths of his

counsels; of ascertaining his intentions as to the condition of man in this world; and of founding the principles of morality, not upon a careful investigation of the stupendous works of his creation, but upon what *appears to us* to be the real nature and extent of his power, his will, and his knowledge. Morality relates to men alone: it can have no existence but relatively to his condition in this universe below; and those philosophers who endeavour to deduce all moral obligations from an eternal reason, from the immutable and indispensable nature of things, as explained by Clarke and others, only labour to establish error, and to confound the plain understandings of men. This view of the nature and tendency of the moral philosophy of Clarke and his followers, his Lordship illustrates at great length, inculcating the opinion that of God's real nature, and of morality, we can know nothing but from the nature of man, and from studying carefully that system with which he is immediately and necessarily connected. In almost every passage on this subject we may recognise those leading principles in metaphysical theology which pervade the "Essay on Man;" and we may also see in particular, the prominent ideas contained in the first two lines of the second paragraph of the first

epistle, a maxim not more philosophically just than beautifully expressed.

> "Say first of God above, or man below
> What can we reason, but from what we know?
> Of man what see we but his station here,
> From which to reason, or to which refer?
> Through worlds unnumbered, though the God be known,
> 'Tis ours to trace him only in our own."

His Lordship holds the doctrine that there is an universal order and gradation amongst all the beings of the universe of nature; some creatures being endowed with vastly superior powers both of body and mind than we are gifted with; and others again, as may be witnessed on our globe, gradually descending in the scale of physical strength and intellectual power, till they become too insignificant for our limited powers of vision and conception. How far this scale may advance above or descend beneath us, no one, he says, but infinite wisdom itself can know. Every reader of the "Essay on Man" will instantly recollect how frequently these opinions and sentiments occur in that celebrated poem.

> "Far as creation's ample range extends
> The scale of sensual, mental, power ascends.

Mark how it mounts to man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in the peopled grass.
* * * * * *
Above, how high progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
From thee to nothing"———

In Bolingbroke's moral philosophy, self-love is considered the sole spring of all our actions, and reason is the faculty implanted in us to regulate that spring. "Experience," says he, "and observation, require time; and reason, that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes slowly to our assistance. It would come too slowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wise Creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of self-love, which is the original spring of human actions, under the directions of instinct first, and of reason afterwards." "Society cannot be maintained without benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues. These virtues, therefore, are the foundations of society; and thus men are led, by a chain of necessary consequences, from the instructive to the rational love of nature

if I may speak so. Self-love operates in all these stages. We love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the centre of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it is the weakest."

In the first and second Epistles of the "Essay on Man," we have this doctrine laid down to us with great exactness, and at considerable length. Indeed these two principles of self-love and reason may be said to form the ground-work of the poem. This must be so well known to every reader, that lengthened quotations are altogether unnecessary.

> "Two principles in human nature reign,
> Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain;
> Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,
> Each works its end, to move or govern all—
> And to their proper operation still
> Ascribe all good—to their improper, ill."

Bolingbroke enters into a long discussion respecting the origin of society, and of our ideas of right and wrong. He differs entirely from Hobbes and others who have written on this subject,—our author says, "it seems then to me, that civil socie-

ties could not have been formed, nor the distinction of just and unjust, nor the honestum and decorum of life have been established, if there had not been, antecedently, such a law of nature as Hobbes denies, and opposite to that which he supposes." "However we suppose the human race to have begun, societies, little indeed, but societies still, must have been coeval with it. If there was a first man and a first woman, they and their children, for these could not nurse and educate themselves, must have constituted a first society." "Families would have been soon raised, and the authority, subordination, order, and union necessary to their well-being, must have followed naturally; as we may observe that they do amongst the most savage people. Men never were, because they could never subsist, in a state of absolute individuality. Self-love, directed by instinct to mutual pleasure, made the union of man and woman; self-love made that of parents and children; self-love begat sociability; and reason, a principle of human nature as well as instinct, improved it. Reason improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united several families into one community, as instinct had united several individuals into one family."

In Pope's third Epistle, he enters into the same

subject; and after inquiring what degree of influence reason and instinct respectively had in framing the primitive societies of men, he has the following lines on the power of self-love in establishing laws and governments, and of giving that firmness to social communities, which is so necessary to their power and security.

> "So drives self-love, thro' just, and thro' unjust,
> To one man's power, ambition, lucre, lust;
> The same self-love in all becomes the cause
> Of what restrains him—government and laws.
> For what one likes, if others like as well,
> What serves one will, when many wills rebel?
> How shall he keep what, sleeping or awake,
> A weaker may surprise, a stronger take?
> His safety must his liberty restrain,
> All join to guard what each desires to gain.
> Forc'd into virtue thus by self-defence,
> Ev'n kings learn'd justice and benevolence;
> Self-love forsook the path it first pursued,
> And found the private in the public good."

In the fifth volume of Bolingbroke's philosophical works, we find he maintains that the world was not made exclusively for man. He observes, "the two assumed propositions I have mentioned so often, that man is the final cause of the world, and

that the communication of happiness to him is the final cause of his creation, are most certainly false, as the scheme of particular providences that fence the law of nature is no doubt, and as that may be which supposes these providences exercised in a manner agreeable to these laws. That the world is fitted in many respects to be the habitation of men, or men are fitted for this habitation, is true. But will it follow, even from the first, that the world therefore was made for the sake of man, any more than it will follow that it was made for any other species of animals, for all of whom, according to their several natures, it is equally well fitted, and for all of whom we may believe on this account very reasonably that it was made, as well as for us? It is as well fitted for Bownce as for you, with respect to physical nature, and, with respect to moral nature, Bownce has little to do beyond hearkening to the still whispers, the secret suggestions, and the sudden influences of instinct. In the works of men, the most complicated schemes produce, very hardly, and very uncertainly, one single effect. In the works of God, one single scheme produces a multitude of different effects, and answers an immense variety of purposes. Whatever

was the final cause of the world, whatever motive, for we must speak after the manner of men, the first cause had to create it, which motive could not arise from any thing without himself, and must be therefore resolved into his mere will; we conceive easily that infinite wisdom, which determined, and infinite power, which executed the plan of the universe, had some secondary, some inferior regard in making this and every other planet, to all the creatures that were to inhabit them, though neither any of these creatures, nor all of them, were, in a proper sense, the final causes for which these planets were created. When we look down on other animals, we discern a distance, but a very measurable distance, between us and them. When we look up to our common parent, the distance is immeasurable, for it is infinite. In the first view, as we have some superiority, we are ready to claim a preference due to us over them. But in the second, and relatively to God, we can boast of no such claim. As the distance is infinite from them, so it is from us to him; for there are no degrees of more or less in infinite."*

The same principles, opinions, and sentiments,

* Phil. Works, vol. v. p. 94.

are to be found in these exquisitely beautiful lines of Pope.

> "Has God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good,
> Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?
> Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
> For him as kindly spread the flowery lawn.
> Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
> Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
> Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?
> Lines of his own, and raptures swell the note.
> The bounding steed you pompously bestride,
> Shares with his lord the pleasures and the pride.
> Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
> The birds of heav'n shall vindicate that grain—
> Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
> Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer.—
> The hog that ploughs not, nor obeys thy call,
> Lives on the labours of this Lord of all."*

These two sentences, marked in italics, in the last quotation from Lord Bolingbroke, are almost word for word found in these lines.

> "In human works though labour'd on with pain,
> A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
> In God's one single can its end produce,
> Yet serves to second too, some other use."

Many more parallel passages might be quoted to establish the identity of the moral systems of Pope

* Essay on Man, Epistle iii.

and Bolingbroke; but it will scarcely be considered necessary to multiply quotations to a greater extent, as enough has been brought forward to satisfy any one on the point under consideration.

We come now to the second part of our subject, namely, to offer a few reasons why Pope and Bolingbroke should be here considered in the light of philosophical moralists. But it will not be necessary to enlarge on this topic, because the arguments which have been adduced to identify their views on morals, go a considerable way towards establishing their claims to this title. It may be true, that should a writer sit down to give us a copious outline or general history of moral science, the chance is ten to one against his ever quoting either Bolingbroke or the author of the "*Essay on Man.*" But this supposed and very probable omission may be easily enough accounted for. Pope was a poet, and poets and philosophers have very little respect or consideration for each other. The former deal too much in fictitious representations and metaphorical imagery, to be relied on as authorities, or to be relished by the cautious and contemplative habits of the latter. And with respect to Bolingbroke, he has certainly rendered himself unpopular amongst moral writers, by his strong and coarse invectives against the

Christian religion. The history of literature strikingly teaches us, that the merits of natural philosophers have always been discussed with more calmness of temper, and have been less liable to be disputed by the real or supposed bad tendency of their religious opinions, than the merits of speculative writers on morals. The reason of this is plain: moral theories being more nearly allied to theology, have, on this account, not unfrequently become subjects of bigotted contention, instead of sober and dispassionate investigation. These theories have not generally been examined on their own merits, or supported for their own sakes, but have very frequently been made the instruments for indirectly supporting various theological opinions professed by different sects of Christians. It is to this cause principally, that the neglect which the moral writings of Bolingbroke has experienced may be attributed, and not by any means to the frivolous and insignificant nature of his speculations themselves. Doubtless he has incorporated religious discussions with his opinions on morals, and it may be granted that these discussions reflect little credit upon his good sense; but this is by no means a sufficient reason why his writings should be altogether overlooked, any more than the moral opinions of several other

writers who have done precisely the same thing. Bolingbroke has a system to promulgate, and he defends and expounds it with as much ability as many who have succeeded him; and every one who peruses his writings, will perceive that if his views have not been generally recognised, it is not from any lack of ingenuity and learning.

To establish Pope's claim to a moral philosopher, it can scarcely be requisite to say much. That he was a lover of system, and a man who delighted in abstract speculations, is abundantly evident, from the general complexion and tenor of almost all his writings, but particularly from his celebrated "Essay on Man." Bolingbroke must have found him a very apt scholar, for he seems to have imbibed his complex notions and views with an ease and rapidity which could scarcely have been expected from his mental habits and lively poetical temperament. It may safely be affirmed, that there is no system of morality so popular amongst the reading part of the community, in this country in particular, as that which is embodied in the works of Pope; nor is there any English poetry so full of real practical truths, as well as theoretical speculations, as his. Here we find the obvious and the abstruse philosophy happily and usefully blended together. He

considers man in the abstract, scrutinizes his nature, and endeavours to unfold those more general and remote principles which excite him to action, that induce him to follow pleasure and avoid pain, and create in him the sentiments of right and wrong; and though his metaphysical morality should not meet with our full assent, we can seldom fail to comprehend his meaning, or to feel highly gratified with his clearness of conception and happy application of poetical language. The common incidents of life, and the delineations and objects of those passions which are excited in the every-day movements of society, he exhibits with the same clearness, and clothes in the same facility of expression; and on all occasions he seems to desire to mould the heart and affections to the practice of virtue. That man is not to be envied who can rise from the perusal of Pope's moral writings, without feeling his heart warmed with the love of all that is morally good and beautiful.

I will here make a few remarks upon the system of these two writers. When I made a few observations on the speculations of Mandeville, I said that the Doctor's views and Pope's were in *principle* quite in unison. To avoid the charge of inconsistency, I think it necessary to remark here, that

Mandeville's system is composed of two points, viz. his theory of the origin of our notions of right and wrong, and that position which he maintains, that vice is in itself beneficial to society. These two principles have no logical connexion with each other. When, therefore, I made the remark upon the similarity between the opinions of Mandeville and Pope, I had in view the latter proposition of Mandeville's, that vice is beneficial, and I am still of the same opinion that the "Essay on Man," in its main principles, is only a versification of the Doctor's philosophy.

In perusing the abstract of Bolingbroke and Pope, we will instantly recognise the leading principles which pervade the whole of their writings,—that man is a being made up of materials partly good and partly evil; that he is placed in a certain situation in the universe, a sort of link in the great chain of nature; that we have no reason to pronounce that any one thing is good or bad of itself, for that all events and things necessarily tend to the good of the whole; and in consequence of the mixed passions implanted in his constitution, man could not have been a better or wiser being than we find him to be, without greatly disturbing, if not altogether destroying, the general arrangements of Na-

ture's works. They maintain that there must of necessity have been such a being as man, to complete the graduated scale of animated nature.

> "Of systems possible, if 'tis confess'd,
> That wisdom infinite must form the best,
> Where all must fall, or not coherent be,
> And all that rises, rise in due degree;
> Then in the scale of reasoning life 'tis plain
> There must be somewhere such a rank as man;
> And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
> Is only this, If God has plac'd him wrong."

It must be granted on all hands that philosophy of this description, principally composed of necessity or fatalism, receives considerable conformation from a careful examination of the system of the world. We every way around see a subordination of one thing to another, a wonderful adaptation of means to ends, particularly in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; and from the frequency of these apparently to us necessary connexions, we feel, in the course of our inquiries into the works of nature, considerable reluctance to believe that any one thing possesses an isolated existence uninfluenced by other things by which it is surrounded. The same mutual dependence and concatenated appearances are observable in the moral world. Here the desires and passions of men are uniform in their natures

and operations; they receive all their importance and strength from acting and re-acting upon one another, and nothing seems more unaccountable to us, than that any one part of our moral constitution should be made solely for itself. It need not, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that such speculations as those of Bolingbroke's and Pope's should take a firm hold of the minds of people in general, and appear so beautiful and philosophically just; recommended, as they are in this instance, by great talents, and powerfully enforced by what passes before our eyes in every moment of our lives. Perhaps, there is no system of abstract moral philosophy which is calculated to communicate such satisfaction to the generality of mankind, as that contained in the "Essay on Man;" and this satisfaction arises in a great measure from the influence of this principle of necessary connexion, of which we have just now been speaking. Men see, or think they see, their own natures placed in that precise and exact situation in the scale of the universe, in which it was most proper they should be placed. And it may be remarked, that there is a principle of fatality interwoven with the other principles of our nature. The wise and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the religious and the profane, are alike influenced in a

greater or lesser degree in their conduct and opinions by this principle. This is manifested in a particular manner, where great reverses in our social condition are experienced, and unexpected occurences happen; the mind seems irresistibly chained down to the belief that the whole man is under the control of some superior power or agency.

There is one inference from this system of moral obligation, which has already been hinted at, and which has been noticed by every opponent to the theory. The inference is this, that if every thing is for the best, then there can be nothing absolutely evil in the world. Right and wrong must be in the abstract the same thing, and those who think differently, and yet at the same time coincide with Pope to the full extent of his principles, that every thing is as it should be, embrace two contradictory views. To get rid of this troublesome, but very logical inference, has been the aim of all Pope's defenders and admirers. He enters himself into a long explanation of certain passages which forcibly express this inference. To the younger *Racine*, who had written a poem called *Religion*, in which he charged Pope with favouring the doctrine of fate, or naturalism, he wrote a letter, in which he endeavours to rebut the charge, but he never says that the objec-

tionable inference does not follow legitimately from his principles. He only says that he does not believe in such a doctrine as that of fate. This indeed might very probably be correct, for many advance principles of philosophy who will seldom cheerfully allow the force of inferences fairly deducible from them.

Some authors have found much fault with what is contained in these four lines of Pope's:—

> "So man, who here seems principal alone,
> Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
> Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal,—
> 'Tis but a part we see and not the whole."

His opponents maintain, that it is not the commonly received doctrine of the immortality of the mind which is here alluded to, but some system of physical necessity or expediency to which we are unconsciously made subservient.—But I think there is little ground for this remark, particularly if we carefully attend to his sentiments on this doctrine of immortality to be found in many parts of his works. It is a little too hard to visit with such undue severity the want of complete logical precision, when we know, from the nature of poetical composition, a great deal of truth must, on speculative points, be often necessarily clouded and obscured,

by the employment of splendid imagery and beautiful versification.

On the knotty and troublesome question in morals, the *origin of evil*, both physical and moral, Pope has said what every rational and candid moralist and divine will say, when hard pressed upon the question. He points out the unreasonableness, nay, absolute absurdity, of asking why things are constituted as we find them, or why there was ever any evil at all introduced into the world. Such questions furnish evidence of an idle speculative curiosity, and great presumption; and he has given all such inquirers a sufficient answer, accompanied with a seasonable portion of sarcasm.

> "Presumptuous man! the reason would'st thou find,
> Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind!
> First, if thou canst the harder reason guess,
> Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less?
> Ask of thy mother earth why oaks are made,
> Taller or stronger than the woods they shade?
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
> Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove!"

Upon the whole, we may be allowed to remark, that the moral philosophy of Bolingbroke and Pope, in its general principles, may be safely considered as sound and good. It has more of the plain philosophy of common sense in its composition than is to

be found in many other systems, and will on that account always have many admirers. What appears orderly, consistent, and directed to some great end or purpose, generally takes firm hold of the judgment. That it is faulty, every one will readily admit. Systems of morality, as well as systems in theology and metaphysics, can never be so firmly established as to be above the reach of logical attacks. But the duty of every rational man is to believe in and defend the particular system in any of these three great departments of human knowledge, which accounts for the greatest number of facts; and is in unison with the greater part of those plain and acknowledged principles of human nature, which must always influence us in a considerable degree, let our speculative opinions be what they may.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SOAMES JENYNS.

ORIGIN OF EVIL.

Soames Jenyns, Esq. was born in Great Ormond Street, London, on the 1st January 1701. His father was Sir Roger Jenyns, Bart., of the ancient and respectable family of the Jenyns of Church-hill, in Somersetshire.

Mr. Jenyns, after having been some time under the private care of the Rev. Mr. Hill, was entered as a fellow commoner in St. John's College, Cambridge, which he left about three years after, to reside with his father at the family mansion near that city. His first literary work was a Poem on the Art of Dancing, published in 1727. In 1742, he was unanimously chosen one of the representatives for the county of Cambridge; a situation he held for the long period of thirty-eight years. He died in December 1787, at the advanced age of eighty-six.

His principal works are "The Internal Evidences of Christianity," and his "Theory of Moral Evil."

We have, under the head of Archbishop King, made a few remarks upon the knotty question, the Origin of Evil. Mr. Jenyns' theory is, however, different in many respects from that of King's; and as the former has attracted considerable notice among a certain class of speculative men, we will here devote a few pages to its consideration.

There have been three leading systems or theories to account for the origin of evil in the world, namely, the doctrine of a pre-existence, the Manichinean theory, and the system of Optimism.

The hypothesis of a pre-existent state is founded upon the position, that the evil we suffer here is a punishment for our crimes committed in a former state of existence. But as it has frequently been remarked by writers who have opposed this theory, that the difficulty is not removed, but only shifted another step backwards; for the question has still to be solved, *Why was evil or sin permitted in that state of being, which, it is affirmed, we were formerly in.*

The Manichinean theory has had some wild, but rather ingenious advocates. It took its name from

one *Manes*, a Persian by birth, one of the *magi* of that nation, and who made his appearance in the first century of the Christian era. The general design he had in view was, to join Christianity with his heathen system of philosophy; and though he openly professed himself a sincere convert to the Christian faith, yet he denied the authority of several of the books of scripture; and in those whose authenticity he admitted, he only took such portions as seemed best to agree with his own peculiar tenets. The leading features of this Manichinean system were, that there were two principles from which every thing was derived. The one a pure and æthereal matter, called *light*, and the other an impure and debased substance called *darkness*. Each of these substances, *light* and *darkness*, is under the government of a Being, existing from all eternity, who modifies and alters it as it suits his own will and pleasure. The Being who presides over the *light*, is called *God*, and he who rules the *darkness*, is called *demon*. These two Beings are always in opposition to each other. The Being who presides over the *light*, is the parent of happiness and order, and is always desirous of diffusing peace and comfort over all; he who rules over darkness is the parent of evil and disorder, and delights to make

other creatures like himself. Thus, a perpetual conflict is kept up; and this, it is pretended, agrees with every thing we see around us, for there is neither pure nor unadulterated happiness or misery, but every thing partakes of a mixed nature. This system has been often examined, and refuted; some adopting arguments, *a priori*, that it is impossible for two independent principles to exist; and some from the general appearances of unity and design, which we every way see so conspicuously pourtrayed in all nature's works.

The doctrine of optimism is, that all things are made and regulated in the best possible manner; and that what we consider evils are part and parcel of a comprehensive system, conducted by infinite wisdom and power, and which is productive, *upon the whole*, of the greatest sum of happiness of which it is, by virtue of its constitution, susceptible.

This system of optimism has been, in all shapes and modifications, the leading creed of by far the most numerous and respectable class of speculative thinkers, in every age and country. It is a theory so agreeable to the feelings of the heart, and to the constitution of nature, as far as we can, by our limited powers, comprehend it, that it will always have many able and influential supporters. But it

is a system liable to be fearfully abused. And this arises, as Mr. Stewart has justly remarked, from two different aspects in which this hypothesis may be viewed; one by excluding free-will, and thereby establishing a scheme of fatalism, prejudicial to all sound morality and religion; and the other, when free-will is conceded, and the general laws of the universe are looked upon as not interfering with the voluntary powers of man. In this sense optimism cannot be in the slightest degree injurious.

The theory of Mr. Jenyn's now before us, is a perfect specimen of optimism, in what may be called its absolute form. His views are contained in six letters to a friend; namely, "On Evil in general," "On Evils of Imperfection," "On Natural Evil," "On Moral Evils," "On Political Evils," "On Religious Evils."

On Evil in general, Mr. Jenyns endeavours to prove that evils of every kind and degree, owe their existence, not to any voluntary admission by the Almighty, but to *the necessities of their own nature;* that is, as our author affirms, from the impossibility of creating beings without them; for in every system of created intelligences, evils of some kind or degree must be experienced by them. "The true solution," says he, "of this incomprehensible para-

dox must be this, that all evils owe their existence solely to the necessity of their own natures; by which I mean, they could not possibly have been prevented without the loss of some superior good or the permission of some greater evil than themselves, or that many evils will unavoidably insinuate themselves by the natural relations and circumstances of things into the most perfect system of created beings, *even in opposition to the will of an Almighty Creator*, by reason they cannot be excluded without working contradictions, which not being proper objects of power, it is no diminution of omnipotence to affirm that it cannot effect them."*

Mr. Jenyns maintains, that a real paradisiacal state is altogether untenable, for that the constitution of the world clearly evinces the utter groundlessness of such a notion. This opinion brought upon him the animadversions of several of his literary contemporaries, and from the manner in which he states his doctrine, as well as from the scope of his subsequent apology, these animadversions seem to have been very pertinent and proper.

In the second letter, the author endeavours to prove that evils of imperfection are not evils at all, but only the absence of some good. This could not

* Works, vol. iii. p. 37.

be prevented in a great and mighty system of things, where all is linked together in due subordination, as in a vast chain, from infinite perfection to absolute nothing.

In the third letter, Natural Evils are treated of. These are generally referred to the same source as the evils of imperfection; namely, to the constitution of our natures and the situation we hold in the scale of being. Mr. Jenyns thinks, that many evils may be inflicted upon us on account of some secret principle in the nature of things, which we cannot recognise, and which renders it necessary, that pain be endured before pleasure can be enjoyed. That many of our miseries may be dealt out to us by the agency of superior beings, who may possess, by virtue of their station in the scale of general existence, the same dominion over us which we possess over the inferior creatures around us. And, also, that for any thing we may be able to advance to the contrary, the doctrine of transmigration may be true, and the evils we are doomed to suffer in one life, may, for the sake of general harmony and usefulness, be rewarded by an increased portion of good in some other state of being.

The fourth letter, on Moral Evil, endeavours to shew, that the commonly received theory of its

arising from an abuse of the free-will of man, is untenable; for if moral evil had not had some remote and indirect tendency to produce general or universal good and happiness, in some unperceived manner by us, it would never have been admitted by a wise and beneficent Creator. The author, however, on this point, candidly admits, that this part of his system is liable to very weighty and formidable objections; but, at the same time, contends that on this question there is only a choice of difficulties, and that he has, in his opinion, chosen the least objectionable.

The fifth letter, on Political Evils, goes on to say, that as man is only an imperfect creature, all governments, by whatsoever name they may be called, must also be imperfect; for it would be a contradiction to look for a perfect government for an imperfect creature. All political evils take their rise from moral ones; and, therefore, Mr. Jenyns maintains, that the most effectual way to improve the science of government, is to commence the work of individual reformation.

The last letter, on Religious Evils, proceeds upon the same scheme as the fifth. All the evils attending religion arise from the wickedness and imperfection which form a part of our nature, and could

not have been altered without creating greater evils. Man being a comparatively blind creature, and not able to see the ultimate end or bearing of the simplest things around, it cannot therefore be expected, that in religious matters, which treat of things of a spiritual nature, he should manifest any great degree of penetration. An imperfect creature must have an imperfect religion, that is, a religion imperfectly understood by him.

We have here a brief sketch of Mr. Jenyns' notions on the origin of moral evil. It must, I conceive, be confessed, that though there is much that is true in his system, yet the influence which it is likely to have upon the mind of an ordinary reader, will not be a favourable one. There is too much of downright fatality in it. When it is presumed all along in his reasonings that vice and misery may be necessary to the general arrangements of providence, and may operate in some unperceived manner to the benefit of the universe as a whole; the impression which will naturally be made upon the mind, will be, that vice may not be so hideous a thing in the eye of the Almighty, as we are daily in the habit of hearing it described to be by the moralist and the divine. I am far from insinuating that such an unfavourable impression was

intended to be produced by the author; on the contrary, I believe, he was sincere and orthodox in morality and religion. But still the fact is undeniable, that his writings in general, and the "*Origin of Evil*" in particular, are written in a style calculated more to puzzle and bewilder, than to instruct and satisfy.

CHAPTER XV.

DR. HUTCHESON.

ON THE MORAL SENSE.

FRANCIS HUTCHESON was a native of the north of Ireland, where his father was a dissenting minister, and was born in 1694. Being destined to the same profession as his father, he pursued his academical studies for six years in Glasgow; and when about to settle as pastor of a dissenting congregation near his native place, he accepted of an invitation to superintend a private academy in Dublin, where he soon acquired the esteem and friendship of many persons of literary distinction, and even of some who held the highest rank in the established church. In 1725, his "Enquiry into the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue" was published anonymously. But the character which it soon acquired, and the eagerness to know the author, produced an investigation which terminated in the discovery that it was the production of Mr. Hutcheson. In 1728 appeared his treatise "Of the Passions," which, on account of

its sentiments and language, was admired, even by many whose opinions on the same subjects were at variance with those of the author.

The publications now alluded to, and the celebrity which they conferred on the author, probably paved the way to his appointment, in 1729, to the professorship of Moral Philosophy in the university of Glasgow. As Mr. Hutcheson was greatly esteemed and respected by Dr. King, archbishop of Dublin, and the author of "*The origin of Evil,*" as well as by some other prelates, it was supposed that through their influence he might have obtained lucrative preferment in the church. But it is alleged, that his private sentiments were incompatible with such views. In the discharge of his academical duties, his talents and learning, as well as the facility with which he expressed himself, soon rendered him a popular and instructive teacher, and the celebrity he thus acquired attracted numerous pupils from all quarters to attend his lectures. He died in 1747, before he had completed the 53d year of his age. He left behind him a system of moral philosophy, which was published by his son in 1755, in 2 vols. 4to.

The moral writings of Dr. Hutcheson seem naturally to divide themselves into two parts, embrac-

ing topics of considerable importance; namely, his theory of a *moral sense*, and his treatise on the *passions*. We will only in this chapter consider the first part of his work, that on the doctrine of a moral sense, and leave his observations on the passions to be examined in a separate chapter. But in making this arrangement, it may be proper here to remark, that the questions proposed for our consideration will be argued without any exclusive reference to what Dr. Hutcheson has advanced upon them himself; as both the doctrine of a moral sense and the general nature of the passions have been treated of, by several other moral writers, particularly by my Lord Shaftesbury. There is little in principle different in the Doctor's system, taken as a whole, from that of his Lordship's, whom indeed he openly professes to agree with, and to follow.

To the former part of his system, that of a moral sense, he has prefixed a theory of beauty, which is uniformly printed with it, and which would seem to have been considered by him as calculated to throw some additional light on the moral speculations which follow that theory.

The reason why several moral writers have slightly inquired, when writing on morality, into the nature of the principles which regulate our

emotions of beauty from material objects, seems to have been, that an affinity was conceived to exist between these emotions and those which were created in the mind by the presence of particular moral objects. There seems also to be a striking resemblance worthy of our notice in passing between several theories of beauty and those of morals. What is the standard of beauty? has been long an interesting and difficult question, as well as what is the standard of morals? There have been three or four leading hypotheses to account for our emotions of beauty which arise from the contemplation of natural objects. First, The theory which conceives the qualities of objects which constitute the beautiful, resolvable into utility or fitness. This resembles the system of morals which is founded on public and private good. Secondly, The notion of Buffier and others, who conceive beauty to consist in a certain unity of parts, or what is most common to all the individual members of a species, bears a strong affinity to the moral theories which are grounded on the assumed faculty of common sense, as defined by Buffier in particular. Thirdly, Those systems of the beautiful which are made up of arrangement, relation of parts, variety, unity, regularity, order, proportion, and uniformity; and

which include the notions of Diderot, Hogarth, and Dr. Hutcheson, are not unlike the moral speculations of Clarke, Wollaston, and others of the same school. Fourthly, The theory of Mr. Alison, which resolves all our feelings of the beautiful into the association of ideas, is exactly similar, (making some allowances for the sceptical inferences which may be drawn from it), to the moral system of some writers who maintain that all our conceptions of moral obligation result from the operations of this very same faculty of association.

Without pursuing reflections on this topic to a further length at this time, we will proceed to make a few remarks on that part of Dr. Hutcheson's system which treats of a moral sense. To avoid lengthened discussion, it will be necessary, as before hinted, to treat this controverted question in a general way, without directly alluding to the particular manner in which he has handled the matter, more than to the speculations of others.

The controversy respecting the existence of a universal moral sense is of such long standing, but particularly within this last century it has been so often agitated, that almost every moral writer in later times has been obliged, by a kind of philosophical etiquette, to say something on the merits of

the question. From this cause, a prodigious quantity of controversial matter has been gradually accumulated, which it is almost impossible to condense into any systematic and popular form, and which has nearly succeeded, by its irrelevant nature and aggregate amount, to keep out of view the exact point in dispute. In fact, this controversy, like many others of a somewhat similar description, has been more a controversy about words than intellectual realities; and looking at the difficulties which stand in the way of a correct statement, from verbal ambiguities and the intricate nature of the subject itself, I am not without my suspicions that what I may advance on the matter may not be adding to, instead of diminishing, the general obscurity.

The word *sense* is of general use amongst us, and when applied to the different organs of the body, or faculties of perception, is not liable to any serious misconception. When some natural objects are applied to our organ of taste, we have a *sense* of their palatable or unpalatable properties. When sounds strike our ears, we have a *sense* of harmony or dissonance; and when odoriferous bodies come in contact with our organs of smelling, we have a *sense* of their agreeable or disagreeable effects. In these instances, the word *sense* has but one mean-

ing attached to it by all mankind. It stands for an instantaneous feeling or perception, preceded by no chain of reasoning or prospective considerations, and is entirely independent of our will. *Moral sense* is an analogous term, derived from these bodily operations and feelings, and when applied to the mind of man, is descriptive of those various emotions and sentiments of approbation and blame, love and desire, aversion and scorn, which constitute such an important part of our moral nature.

The term, *moral sense*, though seemingly very concise and expressive, has, in common with all terms and phrases which attempt to express intellectual appearances by material representations, been not a little fruitful in increasing misconceptions and disputes. Those philosophers who denied the existence of a *moral sense*, took an opportunity of strengthening these arguments, as they thought, by maintaining, that if we have a *sense* of right and wrong implanted in our nature similar to our bodily senses, this moral sense may be liable to all that uncertainty and variableness of object which so strikingly distinguish our material organs of feeling. Nothing, say they, is so variable, and liable to change and uncertainty, as the bodily tastes of mankind. What is considered sweet and savoury to

one set of people in one age, is not unfrequently bitter and disgusting to another race in the same country in a succeeding age. We see, for example, the native of *Greenland*, exulting at the exquisite relish of whale blubber, and the inhabitants of *Terra del Fuego* expressing similar feelings of pleasure when they meet with sea-worms and other objects of a like nature; while, on the other hand, we see whole nations who hold the devouring of these articles of food in perfect abhorrence. But, indeed, there is no necessity to wander so great a distance for examples of this description, for even amongst ourselves we can scarcely find any two people who entirely coincide in all matters connected with eating and drinking, so that we see that nothing but uncertainty prevails on this subject; the principles of sensual, like those of intellectual taste, seem equally unsteady and changeable. Nothing can be pronounced as absolutely sweet or bitter, agreeable or disagreeable, but every thing depends upon custom and habit. And if these have such an extensive influence over our ideas as to qualities of matter, why may they not be possessed of as extensive an authority over our moral feelings and opinions? Besides this consideration, if you maintain the existence of a *moral sense*, resembling

in its mode of operation our other bodily senses, you do thereby go to annihilate all virtue at once; for in that case, right and wrong can have no positive existence; since it is now universally admitted, that when we say that any thing is bitter or sweet, or agreeable, we do not mean that there is any thing absolutely sweet, bitter, or agreeable *in the object itself*, but only *in the mind* of the individual who feels these sensations. It is incorrect, therefore, to say, that virtue has any independent or unchangeable existence; as it is only a thing which arises from a certain relation which subsists between some particular material objects and our own constitution.

Such arguments as these, drawn from the supposed analogies between our bodily senses and that sense which we term moral, have occupied a very conspicuous station in this controversy, and have had a considerable effect in checking the opinions of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and others. But to remove the objections here advanced, nothing seems necessary but to prove the universal acquiescence amongst our species in one or two principles of morals. For if all mankind were to agree that any one material object was always to their taste, sweet or bitter, this would be fatal to the sceptical con-

clusions drawn from the almost infinite variety of tastes amongst us. And, in like manner, if one or two objects of any particular form or colour were by every people accounted sublime or beautiful, this would be sufficient ground for a philosopher to maintain, that the sublime and beautiful were perceived by an intellectual sense implanted in our nature for this purpose. Now there appear to me to be two kinds of actions against which all mankind, no matter of what country or cast they may be, feel emotions of disapprobation the moment they are committed and perceived. These actions are those which inflict personal violence on the body, and those which infringe upon the rights of property.

Were we to meet in the forest one of the most low, degraded, and ignorant of the human race, and immediately commence an attack upon his person or liberty, he would instantly tell you, by signs which could not be misunderstood, that he was very much displeased at your conduct; that, in fact, you had outraged, in his conception, one of the principles of moral duty. There cannot be the least shadow of doubt but this would be the case, for if we found him tame and contented under such treatment, we could not believe him to be of human

construction. Let us take also the other class of actions, those which violate the rights of property. If we find a savage on the beach, and without any apparent motive but that of a desire of possession, go and take away his fishing-net, his club, his bow and arrows, or snatch the shells from his neck or ears, he will instantly, if he perceives no great disparity of physical strength against him, resent the injury in some way or other. He feels disapprobation at your behaviour; he knows that you have done that which you ought not to have done,—that you have violated one of the most essential principles upon which *his* society, rude as it is, is founded; and if circumstances permit, he will, by a mere recital of the transaction, excite among his tribe the same feelings of indignation at your conduct. Here then are two fundamental principles of morals essential to and acted upon by the rudest and most barbarous of the human race; principles of the most extensive influence and importance, for without them it is impossible to conceive how any society, however small, could exist for a single day. The keeping together and rearing even of a single family, presuppose the recognition and active operation of these moral maxims. Man in different countries and climates may have various or oppo-

site ideas of propriety about the intercourse of the sexes; may possess a greater or smaller portion of affection for their aged parents or infant offspring; may call vice virtue or virtue vice; may be ungrateful, revengeful, and wicked, without thinking they are such, but the truth of the original principles of society they feel and proclaim from one end of the world to the other.

Can there be any thing, therefore, improper or unphilosophical in attributing the universal perception and recognition of these principles and morals to a *sense?* *Invariableness* is one of the principal attributes of a sense; and do not all men feel it is wrong if another take from them, without compensation, what is their own? Without such general and instinctive feelings had been implanted in our nature, all human and divine laws would have been as a dead letter.

But some may here object that the savage may feel disapprobation when personal violence is inflicted upon him, because it is accompanied with pain and uneasiness, and he may likewise express censure when you take his beads, or bow and arrows, because the one he conceives *useful* for ornament, and the others are necessary for his very existence. But this objection amounts to nothing;

for the question still remains to be answered, how does the savage know that such and such things are useful or injurious to him? Turn this question over, and examine it on every side, the answer in substance will always be, *that his feelings in body and mind tell him.*

It may be here remarked, that the doctrine of a moral sense—that is, a *sense* which distinguishes a few of the most important elementary principles, so to speak, of moral obligation and duty, seems to accord better with the general arrangements of nature and providence, than the opposite system. By the operations of this sense there is provided, for every state and condition of mankind, a suitable portion of morality to preserve the existence of the race, by obliging them, with all the force of intuition or instinct, to practise those duties, and act upon those principles, which are closely identified with their immediate happiness and individual preservation. It is from the operation of this law, that we are able to recognise, in all communities of men, however coarse and savage, some traces of moral discipline and culture—those rude outlines of our moral constitution, which society, knowledge, and refinement, succeed in filling up and in unfolding more prominently and gracefully

to view. In no country do we find any of the great principles of moral conduct generally reversed; but, on the contrary, amidst the darkness of ignorance, the perversity of prejudice, the childish follies of heathenism, and the corruption of manners, which luxury and voluptuousness engender, we still perceive some portions of uprightness, some manifestations of kindly feelings and virtuous sentiments, which have withstood the contaminating influence of general depravity and licentious confusion. This consideration fully justifies us in affirming that some principles of right and wrong are invariably assented to, and this is quite sufficient to establish the existence of a moral sense, though that sense may be greatly perverted, or limited and circumscribed in its sphere of operation in a very considerable degree.

What has tended to throw considerable embarrassments over the question of a moral sense, has been the attempt to mix it up with innate ideas, and instinctive moral maxims. But from the general scope and tendency of the arguments of those who have advocated the doctrine of a moral sense, it would appear that all they meant by this phrase was *a susceptibility of moral emotion*, when certain moral actions were viewed by the individual.

Now, taking this as a definition of what these writers meant by *moral sense*, is any one prepared to prove the converse of this—that man, in some rude states, is incapable of feeling love or hatred, desire, or aversion? That all actions appear in his eyes equally indifferent and harmless? Is any one prepared to prove these things by a reference to any state of human society yet known? Because nothing short of this can possibly overturn the doctrine of a moral sense, as above defined.

Some writers of eminence have said, that if Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and others had meant by *moral sense*, merely *a susceptibility of moral emotion*, there could have been nothing to urge against the doctrine. But, with all due deference to those philosophers who make this objection, I think it will appear that by moral sense nothing else was meant but this susceptibility of moral emotion. Indeed, if the matter be closely examined, every one will feel convinced that nothing else *could* be meant but this. No intelligible interpretation can be put upon the word *sense*, whether physically or intellectually applied, but what must include the idea of *susceptibility of emotion*. But looking into the second volume of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, page 43, we will instantly perceive what this writer

meant by moral sense; and Dr. Hutcheson professes to have pursued his inquiries precisely on his Lordship's principles. "'Tis impossible," says he, "to suppose a mere sensible creature so ill constituted and unnatural, as that from the moment he comes to be tried by sensible objects, he should have no good passion towards his kind, no foundation either of pity, love, kindness, or social affection. 'Tis full as impossible to conceive that a rational creature, coming first to be tried by rational objects, and receiving into his mind the images or representations of justice, generosity, gratitude, or other virtue, should have no *liking* of these, or *dislike* of their contraries, but be found absolutely indifferent towards whatever is presented to him of this sort. A soul, indeed, may as well be without *sense* as without admiration in the things of which it has any knowledge. Coming therefore to a capacity of seeing and admiring in this new way, it must needs find a beauty and a deformity, as well in actions, minds, and tempers, as in figures, sounds, or colours. If there be no *real* amiableness or deformity in moral acts, there is at least an *imaginary one* of full force. Though perhaps the thing itself should not be allowed in nature, the imagination or fancy of it must be allowed to be from

nature alone. Nor can any thing besides art and strong endeavour, with long practice and meditation, overcome such a *natural prevention*, or *prepossession* of the mind, in favour of this moral distinction.

Though we have hitherto been endeavouring to prove the existence of a moral sense, according to the definition we have given of it, yet we are very much inclined at times to believe, that the importance of the controversy on this subject, has been vastly overrated; or rather, we think, upon close examination, it will appear to be more a war of words than any thing else. The disputants agree in substance, though they differ in modes of expression. The reasons for this are contained in the following considerations.

That the part of our constitution denominated reason enters pretty largely into all moral praise and blame, may be safely admitted without weakening the force of any of the principles of the other system, that of pure sentiment. For though by reasoning we are led to conceive that the mind has to be conducted, as it were, through a certain process, before it can feel the force of moral approbation or disapprobation, yet we must remember, that when we come to the *last step in the process*, the moral emotion seems to follow *instantaneously*,

as if no process of reasoning had been followed. Whether our moral emotions arise from a *long* or a *short* argumentative process, or whether they arise from the *first step*, or the *middle*, or the *end* of the train, can be of no possible importance; for it is agreed on all hands, that when certain things are presented to the understanding, and *not before*, certain moral feelings are invariably awakened. Now the matter for consideration is, whether the susceptibility of the mind to moral emotion is not as much entitled to the denomination of a *sense* when it results from a chain of reasoning as from the statement of a single fact? Moral blame or praise is the result in both cases; the only difference seems to be, that the feelings arise more quickly, so to speak, in the one case than in the other.

But to place this subject in another point of view, let us suppose A to be an individual moral act, which when contemplated by the mind excites an emotion of pleasure which we will call F. And, farther, let B, C, D, and E be other four individual acts, whose various relations to one another must be examined before a similar emotion of pleasure, G, be excited. Now according to the principles of the two theories, those of reason and sentiment, A exciting the emotion F, is considered a complete proof of

the existence of a *moral sense;* whereas the necessity the mind is under to contemplate the relations which B, C, D, and E have to each other, before it can feel the emotion G, is confirmatory of the doctrine of reason; because the mind has here to go through *a logical process* before the emotion is produced. Now, why should the moral emotion F, merely because it seems to follow instantaneously from contemplating A, be referred to a different principle of our moral constitution from the emotion G, when this last emotion follows as rapidly and as certainly from the contemplation of E, the last chain in the reasoning process? Is there any peculiarity in the effects of the two cases, which can entitle us to refer the one and not the other to a moral sense, meaning by this, a susceptibility of moral emotion or feeling? The only difference is, that *a greater length of time* appears to intervene before the one effect is produced than before the other. It would be equally as philosophical in a logician to attribute our assent to the proposition, that two and two make four, to a separate reasoning faculty from that which makes us perceive that the three angles of a right angled triangle are equal to two right ones, because the process of reasoning is longer in the latter case than in the former, as it

is to attribute the two moral feelings we have been examining to two different principles of our moral nature.

The cases here supposed are only an illustration of a part of our constitution well known to every inquirer into its nature. When we hear cries of great distress, our hearts are *instantly* pierced with pity, and we immediately hold out the hand of succour, without ever reasoning or calculating about the propriety or consequences of our assistance. But before we can feel emotions of disapprobation, at ingratitude, for example, or raise up emotions in the breasts of others, a process of reasoning is necessary. We must state facts, examine complicated relations, and draw conclusions, before we can feel ourselves or cause others to sympathise with the extent of the injury done to us. There is nothing here, however, which should induce us to think, that the censurable emotions or feelings against ingratitude are not as well entitled to be referred to a sense as the emotions of pity arising from hearing the expressions of great bodily or mental agony.

Had our bodily frames been so constituted, that before we could hear sounds it was necessary to affect the organs of taste, smelling, and sight in a

particular manner, it would nevertheless be bad reasoning in us to deny, that the sense of hearing was not as much a distinct and individual *sense* as any of the other three, *merely on account of the previous process which was necessary to excite it to action.* The state of the controversy before us is precisely similar. We excite your moral emotions, says one, by simply presenting to your view a moral or immoral action. We cannot, says another, move your affections but by the circuitous route of reason. Where is the difference? Do not both acknowledge the existence of the moral feeling or emotion?

If these observations be correct, they will go far towards shewing, that the difference between these moral writers who advocate what is generally called the selfish theory, and those who give a preference to the doctrine of a moral sense, is at bottom merely verbal. The former maintain that all our moral suggestions are resolvable into *self-love*, or a desire of private happiness, and that this desire for personal gratification is the sole and ever-ruling motive why we prefer some things before others. What determines every man to approve of his own actions, is their tendency to promote his private happiness upon the whole, even though these ac-

tions may, as they often do, bring present pain along with them. The approbation we bestow upon the moral actions of others is, from a conception of their tendency to further, in some degree or other, and by some indirect means, our immediate or distant advantage; and that, in consequence, every man may readily perceive, from mere reason, that the surest method of promoting his own benefit and happiness is to perform actions of a publicly useful description, and to abstain from those which are positively injurious to the social welfare. By living in a manner hostile to the public good, we do great mischief to the whole human race, by injuring the social fabric; and therefore committing evil in a greater or lesser degree upon every man, besides the evils of bad example, which produce a numerous host of disastrous consequences. Every one should therefore look upon these violations of the public good as hurtful to *himself individually*, and for *this reason* disapprove of them. In like manner, every action which is for the public benefit is calculated to benefit personally the person who performs it, and, for this reason, the action should receive our approbation, and the agent be respected.

On the other hand it is affirmed, that this scheme can never account for the principal actions of man-

kind, such as friendship, gratitude, natural affection, generosity, public spirit, and compassion. Men are not anxious of making any such refined calculations respecting their own individual interests when they perform actions corresponding to these different moral principles. The selfish system can never account for that lively approbation, and quick *sense* of the amiable nature or quality of actions performed in distant ages and nations, where it cannot be for a moment supposed that the moral commendations can arise from a perception of any tendency which these actions can have to advance the particular happiness or comfort of the individual who approves of them. We will find, therefore, that in conjunction with self-love, we possess a considerable portion of pure benevolence and disinterested affection towards our fellow-creatures, which inclines us to promote their happiness without any reference to our own. This benevolent feeling varies in intensity amongst mankind, but still it is sufficiently prominent, distinctive, and invariable, that it becomes justly entitled to the denomination of a *sense*.

Now there appears to me to be really very little difference between these seemingly opposite views. When considered in reference to the doctrine of a moral sense, when the selfish theorists tell us that

all mankind perform moral actions because they feel the benefit or pleasure from their performance, these writers state an opinion quite in unison with the system of instinctive feelings. What are these perceptions of benefit or feelings of pleasure, but the very same phenomena which are generally referred to the operation of a moral sense? Convince a man, say the advocates of utility, that such and such actions will be to his advantage, and he will instantly do them. From whom proceed these instantaneous perceptions of advantage? What peculiarities do they possess, which ought to deprive them from being referred to a purely instinctive operation of the mind? They are allowed to be universal, to be certain, and immutable. What more can there be necessary for our considering these perceptions of advantage as the offspring of a *sense* implanted in our nature for the express purpose of creating these pleasurable perceptions in us?

It has been objected against the doctrine of a moral sense, that the *perception* of right does not point out to us the *obligation* why it should be practised. To this objection, we may be allowed to observe, that it would be no argument against the existence of any of our organs of perception, because they only point out to us such qualities of

bodies as are pleasant to us, without teaching us the *obligation* we are under to exercise these organs. The very fact of some things being pleasant to our senses, is the reason why these pleasant things are preferred to what are disagreeable; and reasoning from analogy, we are entitled to maintain that a moral perception becomes obligatory merely because we perceive it to be right. A moral sense is said to point out by a sudden feeling what is right and what is wrong, and our sense of tasting, for example, points out to us what is pleasant and disagreeable. Here the resemblance between the moral faculty and the organ of sense is perfect; the one suggests what is pleasant or unpleasant to the taste, and the other suggests what is right or wrong; and this simple suggestion is the cause of preference or aversion in both cases.

There has been some difference of opinion amongst moral writers, about the meaning generally attached to the term *moral sense.* By some it has been considered as synonymous or equivalent to *instinct* in its common acceptation; and by others it is thought to mean quite a different thing. Those who entertain the latter opinion, ask what is it which forces us to love our offspring? Instinctive feeling, say they; but precisely such a feeling as the lower ani-

mals possess towards their respective young. What is it which enables us to perceive that conjugal fidelity is a virtue of great beauty and importance? It is from notions of the necessity or expediency of the value of this virtue to our own individual happiness and the welfare of the community to which we belong. What is it which points out to us that polygamy is a vice? Precisely the same reasons, that our own and society's comfort demand it. Here we perceive that *instinct* is not only raised to the distinction of a regular *faculty* or *sense*, but that it is set in opposition to that of a *moral sense*, a mode of reasoning I think very inconsistent and unsatisfactory. Looking at the writings of those who have distinguished themselves as advocates for the doctrine of a moral sense, as well as the most distinguished opponents of this system, I am not aware of a single passage, which, if fairly construed, could be viewed to mean any thing else but what is generally implied by the denomination *instinct* when used to express any part of our moral nature. *Moral sense* and *instinct* are perfectly synonymous terms, when applied in the subject of morality. Many authorities, from the most acute and forcible reasoners on moral subjects, might be quoted to support this opinion, were it not that such quotations are in a great

measure unnecessary, as every reader of speculative morality may be considered to be well acquainted with them.

What goes under the general denomination of conscience, a word of very extensive use, may be considered as constituting the same faculty as that of a moral sense, inasmuch as the province which is ascribed to the former, that of feeling moral approbation or disapprobation, is precisely the same as that which is referred to the latter.

It has always appeared to me that the statement of the question, whether there be a *moral sense* or not, is strongly, and I think improperly, made by Dr. Paley, in his "Moral Philosophy." Under the head of *moral sense*, he says, "The father of *Caius Soranius* had been proscribed by the triumvirate. *Caius Soranius* coming over to the interests of that party, discovered to the officers, who were in pursuit of his father's life, the place where he concealed himself, and gave them withal a description, by which they might distinguish his person when they found him. The old man, more anxious for the safety and fortunes of his son than about the little that might remain of his own life, began immediately to inquire of the officers who seized him, whether his son was well, whether he had done his duty to

the satisfaction of his generals? 'That son,' replied one of the officers, 'so dear to thy affections, betrayed thee to us; by his information thou art apprehended, and diest.' The officer with this struck a poniard to his heart, and the unhappy parent fell, not so much affected by his fate, as by the means to which he owed it. Now, the question is, whether, if this story were related to the wild boy caught some years ago in the woods of Hanover, or to a savage without experience, and without instruction, cut off in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and consequently under no influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, or habit,—whether, I say, such a one would feel, upon the relation, any degree of *that sentiment of disapprobation of Soranius's conduct* which we feel, or not?

"They who maintain the existence of a moral sense, of innate maxims, of a natural conscience, that the love of virtue and hatred of vice are instinctive, or the perception of right and wrong intuitive, (all of which are only different ways of expressing the same thing), affirm that he would.

"They who deny the existence of a moral sense, &c. affirm that he would not."

Now, I think, it will appear to every dispassionate reasoner on this subject, that the instance here given,

of the conduct of *Caius Soranius*, is not by any means well calculated to give a fair view of the question under consideration. The morality is the morality of civilized life; the action here cited is of rare occurrence, and many facts might perhaps be urged either in aggravation or extenuation of the conduct here brought under our notice, all of which presuppose a chain of reasoning, and numerous instances of comparison, which it is quite ridiculous to expect to enter into the moral calculations of a savage in the woods, totally destitute of all knowledge and education. It is not affirmed by any of the principal advocates of a moral sense, that this sense is of such a nature as to enable us to come to infallible and intuitive conclusions on abstract propositions, or decide correctly upon the merits or demerits of numerous moral facts, whose individual and aggregate importance can only be estimated by viewing them under many different aspects, and instituting various comparisons. A moral sense is only a term to designate that faculty which enables us in *some cases* to pronounce, on the *spur of the moment*, our approbation or disapprobation of certain moral actions, but it was never seriously pretended that this faculty was the only one with which we are invested, to guide us in all our

moral conclusions. We have already noticed that such an action as ingratitude requires an exercise of the reasoning faculty, and a consideration of circumstances, before we can come to a conclusion as to the share of disapprobation which should be awarded to it; and the action here recited of *Caius Soranius* partakes largely of the ungrateful, and consequently was not a proper test by which the question of a moral sense could be decided.

But it must be acknowledged, that the moral sense cannot be relied upon as an infallible rule or standard of morals on all occasions, as this would be to set up our transitory and accidentally excited feelings, as the best of all moral obligation. To maintain, with Mr. Stewart, that "every being who is conscious of the distinction between right and wrong carries about with him a line which he is bound to observe, notwithstanding he may be in total ignorance of a future state," is, I think, to push the doctrine of a moral sense to too great a length. The common sense and experience of mankind teach us that neither the moralist nor statesman ever thought that the moral sense was of itself of such power and efficacy, and so infallible in its operations, as to regulate and influence man's conduct to what is good, without some other strong

injunctions and incitements to moral improvement. Amongst the ancients, the will of the Gods added a great and powerful influence to the dictates of moral duty; and amongst the modern nations of the civilized world, the more rational doctrines of natural and revealed religion are still better calculated to give additional obligation to the performance of truly good and noble deeds.

END OF VOL. I.

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Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 20 February, 2020